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LESSONS IN
OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY

LESSONS IN OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY



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P R E F A C E

THE title of this book indicates its purpose. It aims at being a Text-Book of Old Testament History, and has been so arranged that it may be used together with the Bible, to explain and illustrate its language, or as a manual by itself.

The former is probably the method that will be most generally adopted, and is also that by which the greatest advantage may be derived from these Lessons. A reference at the head of each directs attention to the chapters of the Bible which are covered by its contents, and which, together with such other passages as are indicated in the text, may be most profitably read in preparation for it. It is hoped that the lessons will prove of a convenient length for this method of study; while the incuts in heavy type will be of assistance in such subdivision as may be thought necessary.

But in some cases it may be preferred to use the book as a manual apart from the Bible; and to make it serviceable for such use, citations from the scriptural books have been introduced, not as notes, but as part of the text, and have been distinguished by italic lettering. These citations have been invariably made from the Revised Version.

It may be remarked that, beyond references to authors, no footnotes have been admitted into this volume. Notes in a text-book, when they are not skipped, are regarded with but little favour by either learner or teacher, and what is worth inserting at all is worth a place in the text.

From the first I have endeavoured to keep in view the fact

that the main value of lessons in Bible history resides in the opportunity they afford for lessons in religion and morality. I have ventured on no theory of inspiration, but have treated the Old Testament as containing a revelation of God to a people chosen to prepare the world for a yet larger revelation, and to make possible for the future a faith purer and nobler than they could receive. That this revelation was necessarily progressive, and that as each higher stage of development was reached, it was liable to invasion from error and superstition, I have not failed to indicate; but I trust that each lesson will be found to offer to the teacher the opportunity of performing the duty, which must after all be left to him, of showing how the New Testament lies hidden in the Old, how the Jewish was a preparation for the Christian dispensation. That the working out of the Divine purpose in Israel proceeded in spite of conceptions of the Divine character which were often very imperfect, seems to me to be a point that cannot be with too much insistence presented in school teaching. It is to keep this point in view that the proper name Jehovah so frequently takes the place here of the word Lord. The fact that the name found no entrance into the New Testament of itself marks a progress in theological conception, and suggests that there might have been current, among the people who so revered it, ideas of the Divine character out of keeping with the revelation of the Father made in Jesus Christ. I have therefore employed this proper name, not only where, as in the great decision at Carmel, the very point of the narrative lies in the choice of Jehovah instead of Baal as Lord, but in all cases where imperfect elements of feeling or belief make themselves prominent; where Israel's God is represented as a national, not a universal sovereign; where His worshippers appear to think of Him as partial to themselves or vindictive to their foes.

It becomes, of course, daily more and more a question how far the results of what is called the Higher Criticism should

be taken into account in teaching the Bible to the young. I have acted on the principle that as yet it is enough to indicate, that not only is Scripture composed of writings of various date and authorship, but that many of what appear as separate books grew to their present form out of materials of uncertain origin, by a process of collecting and arranging which required time and the attention of successive editors. If much has been left unsaid which is destined hereafter to become an inevitable part of the education, at least of the higher classes, in our schools, statements which might afterwards have to be unlearned have been avoided.

A word is necessary as to the treatment of chronology in this volume. It would have been easy to adopt any one of the many systems in existence, and to follow it consistently. But as yet there appears to be no one that commands sufficient recognition to give it authority. It is still necessary to prefix the qualifying word "about" to every biblical date down, at least, to the beginning of the eighth century. I have before me as many as *ten* tables of dates, arranged with the express object of rectifying biblical chronology in the light thrown upon it by recent discoveries among Egyptian, Babylonian, and Assyrian records. Of these, no two agree in the date assigned for the separation of the northern from the southern kingdom. Only two give the same year for the rebellion of Jehu. Even for the accession of Jeroboam II. they all assign a different date. It is not till the last of its occupants, Hoshea, ascends the northern throne, that anything like unanimity prevails. Nor are the differences as to the exact time of such important events slight. For instance, the dates proposed for Rehoboam's accession range from 981 to 929, a period of more than half a century; for that of Uzziah, from 811 to 769; even for that of Hezekiah, from 727 to 702. In such a condition of uncertainty it seems wiser as well as safer, in a school manual, to avoid the venture of a precise date except where there is decided agreement among authorities. And in giving an

approximation it is well to take numbers which present the least difficulty to the memory. Multiples of ten offer this advantage. The accession of Ahab, to take an example, is variously dated 921, 918, 901, 896, 894, 880, 878, 877, 876, 874. Which is correct? Until this is finally settled, "about 900" is safe, and lays the lightest burden on the memory.

For the appearance in this volume of a large number of extracts from and adaptations of Stanley's *Lectures on the Jewish Church*, I have to acknowledge the courtesy and kindness of their publisher, Mr. Murray. In going over ground covered by Dean Stanley's historical writings, it is almost impossible to repress the desire to reproduce his vivid and picturesque narrative. It is hoped that Mr. Murray's kind permission may have served to make these lessons attractive and useful.

I have to thank the Rev. G. Harford Battersby and Mr. H. H. House of Malvern College, for their kindness in reading my proofs; and I am indebted to them, as well as to the Rev. Dr. James, Headmaster of Rugby, and his colleague, the Rev. W. H. Payne Smith, for many valuable suggestions. But in making these acknowledgments I think it right to add that these gentlemen are none of them responsible for any portion of the book, still less for its general arrangement.

ALYTH, 7th March 1898.

ERRATUM.

Page 31, line 11, *for* "Arabian" *read* "Babylonian."

LESSONS IN OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY

I. PRELIMINARY

A glory gilds the sacred page
Majestic like the sun ;
It gives a light to every age :
It gives, but borrows none.

OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY is the history of a people who not only, like other nations of antiquity, believed themselves under the immediate protection of a national God, but declared that their God was God of the whole earth, and that He had chosen them for a purpose which extended to the whole earth. To borrow a phrase from one of the later Hebrew writers, they believed themselves *called according to God's purpose* (Rom. viii. 28).

The peculiar vocation of Israel was to supply the world with a pure morality and a true religion. It is from the prophetic literature that we get the fullest and most definite account of this vocation. But it is implied, if not expressed, through the whole of the Bible. One verse from a prophet may serve in the memory to keep the Divine purpose in view: *The people which I formed for Myself, that they might set forth My praise* (Isa. xliii. 21); one expression from a modern writer: "Israel knew herself as God's servant to the whole world."

And this claim has not been pronounced by the modern world arrogant, but has been universally allowed. In ethics, which have to do with conduct, in religion, which has to do with our thought of the Unseen, we confess that we owe almost everything, not to our Aryan forefathers, but to a Semitic race ;

not to the West, where is our home, but to the East. In other words, we confess that God chose the people of Israel to make Himself known to the world through them, in His righteousness and His love for men.

Since History has to do with nations, not with individuals, or even with tribes, Old Testament History cannot properly be said to begin till Moses gave Israel organisation and law.

But, happily for us, the Hebrews looked back much farther than the Exodus for the beginning of their history. Their earliest annalists loved to gather up the traditions that had survived from primæval times about the forefathers of the race, and thus preserved the Patriarchal tales that we loved as children. Like most nations, too, they were intensely curious about the origin and the early progress of the world, and the dark problem of the existence of evil pressed upon their minds. But, above all, they were conscious that the great purpose for which they had received the Divine call must have been indicated long before their national birth-hour. They found it, indeed, proclaimed with striking clearness in the promise made to their great ancestor Abraham, and far back, close to the origin of things, in the announcement of a destined restorer of the blessings forfeited in Eden (Rom. xvi. 20). Thus Old Testament History begins with the Creation and the Fall.

But, first, some little must be said of the people round whom the wonderful history moves, of the names by which they were called, the language they spoke, and the books they wrote.

Origins of the Race.—The Chosen People were of that widely spread race to which belonged the Phœnicians, Syrians, Moabites, Ammonites, Arabs, and the Semitic-tongued inhabitants of Assyria and Babylonia. That word *Semitic*, properly *Shemitic*, denotes, racially, a descendant of Shem, but is generally used to embrace all tribes and nations speaking a language akin to that of the modern Arabs. Some of those enumerated above may have been of different descent from the Hebrews, but all of them spoke a language with a grammatical structure nearly identical with, and a vocabulary closely allied to, that of Israel. A triangle cut out of Western Asia, having the Mediterranean and the Red Seas as a western boundary, its apex in Mount Taurus on the north, and as its eastern side a line drawn along Mount Zagros and the Persian Gulf to the Indian Ocean, was the country over which, in

their original nomad state, these races wandered, or in which, long before Palestine was known to history, they gathered in large and prosperous cities. They all enter at some point and in some degree into Old Testament History, but its principal actors had their cradle, or had made their home, somewhere in the north-eastern portion of the country just described.

Names of God's Elect People.—They called themselves ISRAEL, or *Bene-Israel*, that is, sons or children of Israel, sometimes House of Israel, or House of Jacob, but in early times foreigners knew them as HEBREWS, in later times as JEWS. The derivation of the name Hebrew is disputed, but it most probably connects the people with *Eber*, a geographical term meaning *beyond* (eber ha-nahar, beyond the river), but in Genesis x. the name of one of the descendants of Shem, and (in chapter xi.) an ancestor of Abraham.

The word *Jew* is a corruption of *Judean*, and came into use from the supremacy of Judæa in the Palestine known to the Greeks and Romans.

The Hebrew Scriptures.—The terms *Old* and *New Testament* date from about the close of the second century of our era. An expression of St. Paul's was the origin of the use. In 2 Cor. iii. 14, in an evident reference to the Jewish Scriptures, he speaks of the *reading of the Old Testament*. In the Revised Version the Greek word employed is rendered "Covenant," but the translators in King James' day followed the Latin version in the choice of the word *Testament*.

Elsewhere St. Paul employs the expression, then in common use, "the Scriptures," or "the Writings."

Our word *Bible* is from another expression, τὰ Βιβλία, in general use among Greek Christians for "the books or scriptures." The byblus or papyrus reed (whence *paper*) supplied the material for books.

Divisions of the Hebrew Bible.—The Jews divided their sacred books into three parts—

1. "The Law" (*Torah*), comprising the first five books. Other names for it were "The Book of the Law," "The Book of Moses."

2. "The Prophets" (*Nebiim*), comprising Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings (which we include among historical books), Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve minor prophets.

3. "The Writings" (*Kethubim*), comprising three sets of books—

(a) Psalms, Proverbs, Job.

(b) Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther.

(c) Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, 1 and 2 Chronicles.

But they only counted twenty-four books, instead of thirty-nine, as we do, since they made no division of the Books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles, joined Ezra with Nehemiah, and treated the twelve minor prophets as one book.

Divisions of the English Bible.—In our Old Testament the books are conveniently arranged according to their subject-matter.

1. The Pentateuch (*ἡ Πεντάτευχος*, *sc.* βιβλος), or *The Five-Volumed Book*, because the sections comprising it, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, were written on a single roll. The term Hexateuch is often used to include Joshua.

2. The Historical Books, from Joshua to the end of Esther.

3. The Poetical or Devotional Books, from Job to the Song of Solomon.

4. The Prophetical Books, from Isaiah to Malachi.

Of their authorship and composition, the Books of the Bible tell us very little. The prophets of the eighth century were the first among Hebrew writers to publish under their own names. The Pentateuch and Historical Books grew to their present form by compilation, and often refer to the materials quoted and copied, or collected and arranged, by the various editors who took part in their composition. Sometimes the reference is to the name of a writer, as Moses, Samuel, Nathan, Gad; sometimes to a book, as *The Book of the Wars of the Lord*, *The Chronicles of the Kings of Israel or Judah*.

The dates of composition of the various Narrative Books can only be discovered approximately by careful examination. If, in any case, this examination leads to a result which fixes the date of a given book at a period far later than the events it recounts, this does not necessarily imply that the materials on which the editor worked were themselves recent.

II. THE CREATION

GEN. i. ii. 1-3.

He spake, and it was done: He commanded, and it stood fast.

Two Accounts.—Genesis (that is, Origin) is the first of the five books composing the Pentateuch. The Jews called it by its first Hebrew word, meaning “in the beginning.” It opens with two accounts of the origin of the visible world. It is not uncommon in Scripture to find two or more narratives of the same event, sometimes placed side by side, sometimes woven together into one. This has led to the theory that the books as we have them have passed through several successive editions. It is recognised that at least three narratives, originally independent, have been combined to form the Pentateuch.

The first account of Creation occupies chapter i. and the first three verses of chapter ii.

The second is plainly introduced for a different purpose than that which governed the writer of the first. It is not concerned with the origin of the universe as a whole, but only with the preparation of the earth for the garden or park in which man is to be placed for his probation. It refers to the creation of what is above the earth only in one word, “the heavens”; it omits all reference to the sea and the creatures in the sea. It will be properly considered, therefore, in connection with the Garden of Eden. Both accounts were probably derived from ancient Babylonian traditions, but show, by their freedom from the mythological superstitions of Chaldaea, the Divine guidance of the Hebrew writers.

The First Account.—

Immediate are the acts of God, more swift
Than time or motion, but to human ears
Cannot without process of speech be told,
So told as earthly notion can conceive.

So speaks the angel Raphael to Adam in the *Paradise Lost*, and the words are a fit preparation for the biblical narrative of Creation. The writer, though inspired, could only tell us that all things above, upon, and beneath the earth had their origin in one sole Wisdom, Love, and Power. He could not tell *when* the Divine work began—only that it had a beginning. He could not describe *how* the work was done—only that it

proceeded in orderly sequence. His one purpose he amply fulfils: that is to tell how all that exists that is *not* God, owes its being *to* God, that the universe is to be ascribed both in form and substance to His creative fiat. We must look here for religion and for poetry, not for science.

The world springs into being, but it is at first *without form and void*, waste and empty. The only stir in it is the Spirit or Breath or Wind of God, that flutters like a bird over the deep.

The Works of the Six Days.—This is the stage for the creative drama which is now to begin. There is but one actor, God. The time is a week, six days of Divine labour, followed by a Divine Sabbath, a thought so natural to a Jew. Each day, too, is described after the manner of the Jews, who reckoned from sunset to sunset. *And there was evening and there was morning, one day.* In the six days of activity eight acts of creation have to be presented. On the third day, therefore, and on the sixth, the creative *fiat* goes forth twice, and twice the sentence of approval is passed, *And God saw that it was good.* But Hebrew seers were *not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day* (2 Pet. iii. 8). We know not what indefinite time was in the writer's mind.

1. God speaks across chaos, and light suddenly fills space, making possible the interchange of day and night.

Let there be light said God, and forthwith light
Ethereal, first of things, quintessence pure,
Sprung from the deep, and from her native east.

2. The vault of heaven is next framed to divide the upper from the lower waters. The Hebrew word translated *jirmament* means no more than an expanse, something stretched out, like the canopy of a tent (Isa. xl. 22) or a roof of glass (Job xxxvii. 18). Greek poetry represented the sky as solid, sometimes as a brazen, sometimes as a crystal, vault.

3. The lower waters are gathered into oceans and seas, and dry land appears.

Immediately the mountains huge appear
Emergent, and their broad bare backs upheave
Into the clouds, their tops ascend the sky;
So high as heaved the tumid hills, so low
Down sunk a hollow bottom broad and deep,
Capacious bed of waters.

The growth of vegetable life succeeds on the same day.

He scarce had said, when the bare earth, till then
Desert and bare, unsightly, unadorned,
Brought forth the tender grass, whose verdure clad
Her universal face with pleasant green,
Then herbs of every leaf.

4. On the fourth day God created the sun and moon and stars. The importance of these lights as heavenly time-pieces is recognised, *Let them be for signs, and for seasons and days and years.*

5. Creatures make their appearance in the air and in the sea, moving and having life—fowl and sea monsters.

6. The sixth and of creation last arose
With evening harps and matin, when God said
Let the earth bring forth soul living in her kind,
Cattle and creeping things, the beast of the earth,
Each in their kind.

But

There wanted yet the master work, the end
Of all yet done : a creature . . . to adore
And worship God supreme, who made him chief
Of all his works.

*And God created man in His own image ; in the image of
God created He him ; male and female created He them.*

Thus Creation ended, and the first Sabbath dawned on the world. *And God rested on the seventh day from all His work that He had made.* Not that the Divine activity really ceased (see John v. 17), or that the Divine Being needed rest, but to show that the weekly pause from earth's duties to let the soul lift itself to God is a Divine institution, and has been sanctified and hallowed from above.

This Hymn of Creation that begins the Bible is not the only thing of the kind to be found there. The theme of Creation, and its call to praise God, is a constant theme of Hebrew poetry. In Job we read how the *morning stars sang together* (Job xxxviii. 7) over the birth-hour of the earth. The 104th Psalm tells how all nature woke to life and order at the appearance of its Lord clad in light. And it ends with words which were habitual to the religious Jew as he mused, a thing he loved to do, on the origin of the world.

Bless the LORD, O my soul. Praise ye the LORD.

III. EDEN

GEN. ii. 4-24.

For man to tell how human life began
Is hard.

Some day Science may be able to tell in set terms. At present it can only be told, as poets tell it, in figure or parable. Inspired Scripture was written under the same conditions. The Hymn of Creation which begins the sacred book is followed by another poetic glimpse into the origin of human society, where, search as we will, we can find only suggestive image, or truth veiled in parable.

The opening words, *These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created*, belong properly to what has preceded, but would have been more in place at its commencement, for *these are the generations* is the usual formula in the Book Genesis for the introduction of a genealogy, or a family history. It occurs *ten* times (Gen. ii. 4, v. 1, vi. 9, x. 1, xi. 10, xi. 27, xxv. 12, xxv. 19, xxxvi. 1, xxxvii. 2), dividing the whole book into as many sections.

The second account of Creation, therefore, begins with the words: *In the day that the Lord God made earth and heaven.*

The word LORD printed in capitals always represents the proper name of the God of Israel, *Jehovah*, or, more properly, *Yahveh*. The meaning and significance of this name will be told later on (see Lesson xxvi.).

The Creation of Man.—It is the beginning of the human race, and this only, that the writer has in view. The creation of the universe is only alluded to, and no mention is made of luminaries above, or seas beneath. *And no plant of the field was yet in the earth, and no herb of the field had yet sprung up: for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground; but there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground. And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.*

Where was this sublime creature to dwell? A special spot

was necessary, both for his innocent enjoyment and his probation. *And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed.*

The Greek Bible uses the Persian word *paradeisos*, or *park*, which has supplied religion with the expressive "paradise." And the description suits a park better than a garden, a description which requires space for the river which *went out* (i.e. rose) to water the garden, and flowed on till it divided into four heads:—*Pishon: that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; Gihon: the same is it that compasseth the whole land of Cush; Hiddekel* (Dan. x. 4): *that is it which goeth in front of Assyria (to the east of Ashur, i.e. the city A., not the country); Euphrates.* Two of these rivers we know, and they bear the names by which the ancient inhabitants of Mesopotamia, which lies between them, called them, and wrote them down in their strange wedge-like letters. *Pura*, "the water," the most ancient form, was changed by the Semitic settlers in Babylonia into *Purat*, and the Hebrews wrote it *Perath*, and still called it, without any qualifying adjective, "the river." It was the Persians who changed it into *Ufratu*, and gave the Greeks and us the name *Euphrates*. The *Hiddekel* may be the *Idiglat* of Assyrian texts, the river which the Persians taught us to call the *Tigris*.

The Site of Eden.—But even with these indications it is as yet impossible to fix the precise locality of the poet's creation, though we may well believe it to be coloured by the memories that had floated down to him from the ancestral home of his race, in whose literature, so marvellously preserved and so cunningly deciphered, scholars are finding so much to confirm and illustrate the early biblical narratives. There the names Eden and Cush,—not the African Cush or Ethiopia,—and possibly Gihon, have been already found, and the precious stone *shoham*, rendered here "onyx," has been plausibly identified. But if Havilah (*Khavila*, Gen. x. 7, 29, xxv. 18; 1 Sam. xv. 7) is, as now suggested, N.-E. Arabia, the problem is further complicated.

But we need no map to realise the life of innocence and peace possible there. All the forest's splendour and all the garden's grace had been supplied. *For out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food.*

And in the centre stood the two symbolic trees, the *tree of life*, and the *tree of the knowledge of good and evil*.

Here, dressing and keeping the garden, and amply sustained by its fruits, the man might live in enjoyment so long as he revered the command: *But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*

The Creation of Eve.—But his happiness could not be complete without society. This he could not find in the animal world, of whose creation mention is now made. Amid them the godlike gift of human speech could only find exercise in fixing to each creature a name.

Then was given him a true companion, *bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh*, and marriage to one wife appears in the first page of the Bible, as throughout to its last, as a Divine institution, sacred and blest, the beginning and safeguard of society, and the type of the union of the Church with its Lord.

IV. PARADISE LOST

GEN. iii.

Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world, and all our woe,
With loss of Eden, till one greater man
Restore us and regain the blissful seat,
Sing heavenly Muse.

Speculation has often busied itself with the question how long the idyllic picture of peace and happiness in Eden remained undisturbed. The narrative gives no hint of time. It is with the fact that sin and evil entered into God's world, and the sad steps by which the entrance was made, that it concerns itself.

The Serpent.—*Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made.* So the sad tale of human corruption begins, with a serpent. There is not a word said of Satan, who afterwards appears in the Bible as the Tempter, not a hint given that the machinations of a fallen angel are signified. The serpent is compared to the other beasts of the field. The curse is presently pronounced on the reptile, in terms that are applicable only to the serpent

that crawls. It is a *type* we have before us, a *symbol* of evil. And there is special significance in the selection. "The towering pride of the serpent's crested head and the beauty of its glittering skin, the subtle fascination in the fixed and steadfast gaze of its unshaded eye, the wily cunning of its tortuous movements, the malignant venom of its poison, the undisguised shamelessness of its natural lusts, the low and grovelling descent into the dust of the earth, are indeed fit emblems of almost every form of the darker side of human life."¹

The woman's approach to a forbidden thing gave its opportunity to temptation. Those are true pictures which make Eve, when she goes near the tree of knowledge of good and evil, find the serpent coiled round its stem. The dialogue at the tree has been repeated in millions of human souls. To question authority and rebel against it as something founded in suspicion or jealousy, is a frequent avenue to sin. And the defiance is supported by the hope and the belief that the end will be good and advantageous, whatever the means that secure it. It is not the fall of an individual, but of humanity, that is told in these words: *And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat; and she gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat. All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the vainglory of life* (1 John ii. 16), were here combined in one object.

The craving for a larger experience bore its fruit in two ways.

The Fall.—Knowledge came of good and evil, the awakening of a moral sense. *And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil.* But as it came, not by resisting temptation, but by yielding to it, it brought with it self-condemnation. Shame was the result of sin. The freedom of innocence was gone. *And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked.* They could no longer walk unabashed before God and each other. In the cool (literally *wind*) of the day, when the evening breeze tempts Eastern people abroad, they dared no longer seek high communion with God. They hid themselves, though they had *sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.* Sin cannot cover itself.

¹ Stanley. Sermon preached at Oxford 8th February 1863.

But it will try to find excuse in others' fault and in circumstance. And so the woman blames the serpent, and the man takes refuge behind the woman's example. But though the doom pronounced upon the serpent shows that the tempter will not go unpunished, it is written here in unmistakable characters that everywhere penalty must follow guilt. Whatever be the meaning of the suggestions in this allegory as to the presence of evil in the world, the writer has most truly represented pain and trouble and weariness and vexation and disappointment as the natural consequences of sin, consequences that affect not an individual only, but all the earth. *Cursed is the ground for thy sake ; in toil shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life.*

On himself and on his race Adam closed the gates of Old Eden for ever. Return to past innocence is impossible. But there is mercy as well as judgment in the doom of exclusion : *And now, lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat and live for ever, therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.* Immortality so gained would have meant an immortality of evil. But as there was to come a new Adam, who should *bruise the serpent's head*, born of a woman, so that woman's curse should prove a blessing (1 Tim. ii. 15), so there was to be another Eden. And it is in the *new Paradise* which the Seer of Patmos saw that the Tree of everlasting life stands, and to eat of it is given to those who in penitence and faith turn to the Saviour of the world. *Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have the right to come to the tree of life* (Rev. xxii. 14).

Before that restored Eden of the future there stand no angel guards with flaming swords. But, stationed at the gate of the lost Paradise, the Cherubim (see Lesson xxxiv.) symbolise well the irrevocable nature of the past, and the danger of remorse, which broods only on what is lost, while true penitence looks on with the hope of salvation to the future, like those two who started to begin the great world's history,

Some natural tears they dropt, but wiped them soon :
The world was all before them where to choose
Their place of rest, and Providence their guide :
They hand in hand, with wandering steps and slow
Through Eden took their solitary way.

V. THE ANTEDILUVIAN WORLD

GEN. iv.—vi. 8.

A monster then, a dream,
 A discord. Dragons of the prime
 That tare each other in their slime
 Were mellow music match'd with him.

It is not the purpose of the inspired narrator to write the history of the world. His object is to write the history of Redemption. Starting from the broad fact of man's alienation from God, he proposes to trace that element in human history which results in the perfect union of God and man. In the promise made to the woman one faint note had already been struck of the music that was to grow through the ages till the angels took it up over a cradle at Bethlehem. But before the final word on redemption can be spoken, much has to be told of human wickedness and the signs from Heaven of condemnation of it.

The World before the Flood.—In the picture of the antediluvian world we are invited to see man at his worst. He has fallen so low that even to the Creator there comes regret that he has ever been made. *And the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart.* We are reminded of the Roman satirist's description of the society of his day—

Nothing is left, nothing for future times
 To add to the full catalogue of crimes :
 Vice has attained her zenith.

In a period that began with fratricide we can well imagine a rapid increase of corruption, but how the climax of crime was reached we can only guess. In the background of the history of every race are stories of unnatural marriages, and broods of giants who stalk with unrestrained violence through the land. The *Nephilim* (see Revised Version and margin) may have been such Titans, and those *mighty men which were of old, the men of renown*, who were the offspring of the alliances

between the sons of God and the daughters of men. Sensuality and pride of strength are indicated here. Life, too, is represented as extended over as many centuries as there are decades in the ordinary span allotted to man, and there is nothing which tends so surely to forgetfulness of God as the feeling of security such longevity would produce.

But all were not unrighteous. Even in this antediluvian world, and in spite of all adverse influences, there were witnesses to God. These were in the line of Seth. That of Cain, while capable of material progress, so that to it is traced the rise of music and the industrial arts, supplies no example of piety. It is with the annals of this family that the history of this period begins, as if to put it aside before going to its main purpose, the story of the family which kept alive the thought of God and goodness.

Cain and Abel.—It opens with a terrible crime, a second fall.

Most sacrilegious murder hath broke ope
The Lord's anointed temple, and stole thence
The life o' the building.

The first child of Adam and Eve was Cain, born apparently in Eden, before the expulsion. So at least iv. 16 suggests. He became a tiller of the ground, while his brother Abel was a keeper of sheep. Their occupations naturally determined the nature of their offerings, when they came to discharge the rites of that early religion. *And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering, but unto Cain and to his offering He had not respect.* He looked, not at the value of the offering, but to the state of the soul from which it proceeded. He does not judge of what we are by what we say to Him or by the form of our worship, but He judges what we say to Him and our form of approach to Him by what we are. By faith, says a New Testament writer, *Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain* (Heb. xi. 4). How the sense of approval and disapproval was conveyed to the brothers we are not told. The current idea among the fathers was that fire fell from heaven and consumed Abel's sacrifice. All we see is Cain's displeasure.

Hatred and envy entered into him, and, anticipating guilt,

he went about with his gaze fixed on the ground ; for it is only the innocent who dare look up. *And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth ? and why is thy countenance fallen ? If thou doest well, shall it not be lifted up ? and if thou doest not well, sin coucheth at the door : and unto thee shall be its desire, but thou shouldest rule over it* (Revised Version, margin). It was still possible to resist the impulse of his fierce anger. But he would not, and the first murder stained the startled earth with blood that cried for vengeance.

Foul deeds will rise
Though all the earth o'erwhelms them to men's eyes :
For murder, though it have no tongue, will speak
With most miraculous organ.

The Arabs have a belief that over the grave of a murdered man his spirit hovers in the form of a bird that cries, "Give me drink, give me drink," and only ceases when the blood of the murderer is shed.¹ Cain's conscience told him the same thing. God did not, however, pronounce the doom of death upon him, but only drove him forth a wanderer over an earth cursed a second time, and by his deed. But he said, *Whosoever findeth me shall slay me*. And the Lord was merciful, and *appointed a sign for Cain, lest any finding him should smite him*. "The brand of Cain" has become a proverb, but there is nothing to suggest a mark upon his person, and the nature of the sign we are not told. All we see is the guilty man going from the presence of the Lord, where he might yet have repented, wandering into the land of wandering (*Nod*) *in front of Eden*, an expression which suggests nothing but an endless exile from happiness.

The Descendants of Cain.—Seven generations of the line of Cain are indicated. With LAMECH in the sixth began polygamy, which has been the curse of Oriental life, and even at its institution produced the bloodshed that has so often attended it. A piece of enigmatical verse alludes to it, memorable as the earliest instance of a kind of composition that was to be the vehicle of the noble Hebrew song—verse in which parallelism, or

¹ *Expositor's Bible*, "The Book of Genesis," by Marcus Dods, D.D., p. 39.

the balance of one clause or thought against another, was to serve the purpose of metre and rhyme.

Each of Lamech's three sons marks an epoch in the progress of human society. JABAL was the first nomadic sheik or chief. To JUBAL is traced the beginning of the Fine Arts; to TUBAL-CAIN, that of the Useful Arts.

The Descendants of Seth.—Although the development of the religious life was reserved for the line of SETH, yet we are told but little of this till eight generations have passed. The account is with two exceptions a bare genealogy, giving but the name and age of the leading representative of the family, and recording his death. But when Seth's son ENOSH was born, it is said, *then began men to call on the name of the LORD*. And of ENOCH we are told that *he walked with God, and was not, for God took him*, or, as the Epistle to the Hebrews interprets it, *was translated so that he should not see death* (Heb. xi. 5). He had been known as the friend of God. Where could he be but in God's dwelling-place?

VI. THE FLOOD

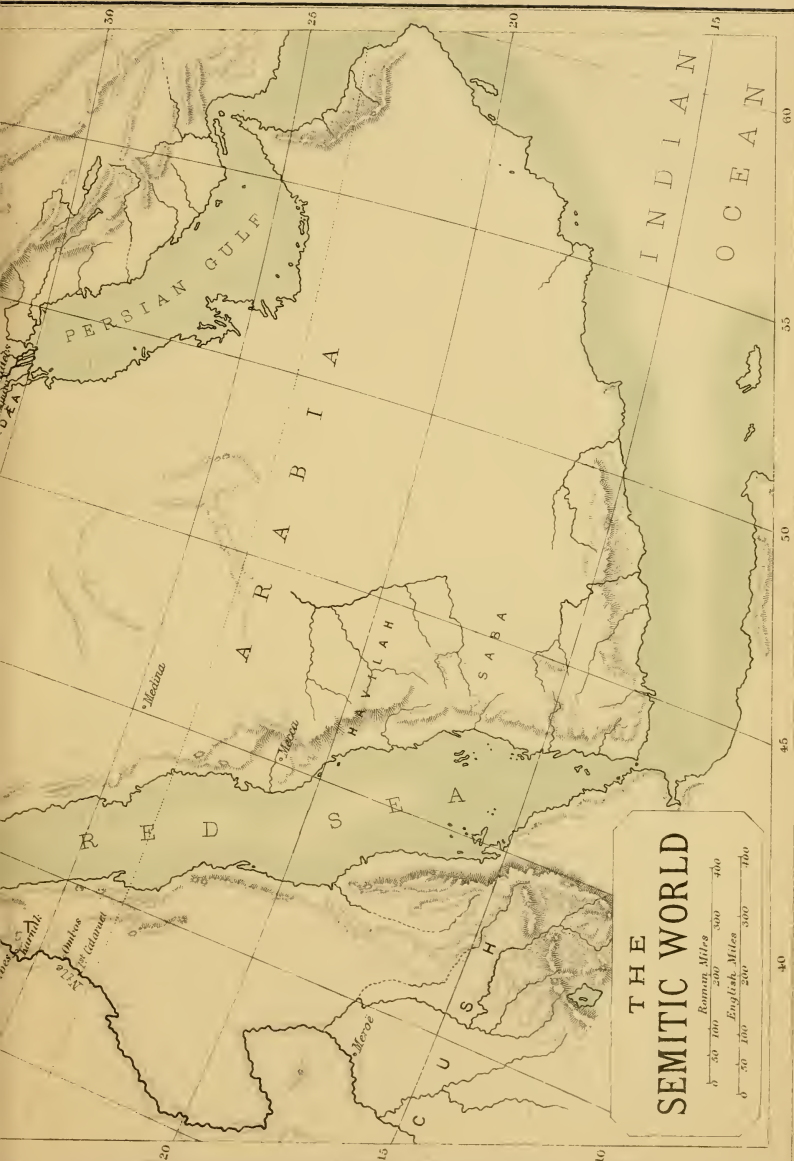
GEN. vi. 7-ix.

Water, water, everywhere!

There was a Lamech of the family of Seth, as well as that of Cain, and he appears before us as a type of the weariness of that old world—old, yet so young. The burden of the primal curse weighed heavily upon it, and each generation could only look forward to the next, in hope that things might mend. Lamech could not rest from *the work and toil of his hands because of the ground which the Lord had cursed*, but he called his son *Noah*, that is, “rest.” For all but one family it was to be the rest of death.

Traditions of the Flood.—A tradition of a flood, from which only few were saved, is common to many nations, but those of the Semitic tongue have preserved it with fullest and most pictorial detail. It supplied to Hebrew literature images for its poetry and figures for its religion. Among the clay tablets discovered in Babylonia is a series containing a long poem of a





**THE
SEMITIC WORLD**

| | |
|---------------|--------------------|
| Roman Miles | |
| 0 | 50 100 200 300 400 |
| English Miles | |
| 0 | 50 100 200 300 400 |

deluge. The narrative in Genesis appears, from the repetitions it contains, to be composed of two traditions, one of which has many points of agreement with the Babylonian story.

And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the ground; both man, and beast, and creeping thing, and fowl of the air; for it repenteth Me that I have made them. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.

The Ark.—To save this pious man and his family, and prevent the extinction of animal life, the ark was contrived. The dimensions are carefully given. *This is how thou shalt make it: the length of the ark three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits.* Taking the cubit to be 21 inches, these dimensions give a length of 525 feet, a breadth of 87 feet 6 inches, and a height of 52 feet 6 inches. Longer vessels are built now. The *Lucania* and *Campania* of the Cunard Line are 601 feet long, but their breadth and depth are only 65·2 and 37·8 respectively. The Great Eastern had a length (on deck) of 691 feet, and was 83 broad and 58 deep.

But the details of the construction are exceedingly obscure. We must put the shape of modern vessels out of our minds, and think apparently of an oblong chest, a mere floating house which could not sail. A coating of fresh bitumen within and without made it water-tight. It was furnished with a door, and with openings for light and air, but their arrangement is hard to understand. There was no upper deck, but a covering, possibly of skins. Two lower decks divided the structure into tiers, each of which was furnished with small cabins, expressively called, in the Hebrew, *nests*. How long it took to build this refuge we are not told; but when it was ready, *Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives. . . . Of clean beasts, and of beasts that are not clean, and of fowls, and of everything that creepeth upon the ground, there went in two and two unto Noah into the ark, male and female, as God commanded Noah. . . . The same day were all the fountains of the great deep (whether of the waters above or below the firmament we are not told) broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights. . . . And the waters prevailed, and increased greatly upon the earth; and the ark went upon the face of the waters. Fifteen cubits upward*

did the waters prevail. . . . And every living thing was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, . . . and Noah only was left, and they that were with him in the ark.

For 150 days the ark floated, and then grounded on *the mountains of Ararat*, or Eastern Armenia. Ararat was the indigenous name for the whole lofty plateau which overlooks the plain of the Araxes on the north and of Mesopotamia on the south. It is now confined to the two peaks—the Greater and Lesser Ararat. The former of these is called by the Persians “the Mountain of Noah.” The waters had begun to abate. Eagerly the inmates of the ark watched for the dry ground, sending out birds as messengers to bring back some welcome sign. The raven did not return, but went to and fro until the waters were dried, a ghastly suggestion of floating carrion; but when the dove, on her third mission, failed to return, the sign had come, and the prisoners were released.

There is not a word in this narrative of sympathy for the drowned. In this respect it offers a contrast to the Babylonian story, where we are told how the Chaldæan Noah was affected at the sight that met his eyes when he ventured to look out. “I opened the window and the light broke over my face. It passed. I sat down and wept. Over my face flowed my tears. Like reeds the corpses floated.” . . . There is nothing like this in the biblical account, which is pitiless as Nature itself. It is the stern religion of the Old Testament that speaks: the spirit that could put aside compassion when it felt itself the minister of the Divine wrath, the spirit that was so different from His who wept over the Jerusalem whose doom He was fated to pronounce.

VII. THE CONFUSION OF TONGUES

GEN. viii. 15–xi. 1–10.

In all the speeches of the babbling earth.

The world's life after the Flood began with a religious rite. Noah built an altar and offered a sacrifice, which was pronounced acceptable. *And the Lord smelled the sweet savour.* The Hebrews fearlessly endow the Most High with eyes and nose, and mouth, and all the senses of man.

God's Covenant with Noah.—And now a word that plays a great part in biblical history meets us, the word “covenant.” Among men a covenant is an agreement. In Theology it is a promise or engagement on the part of God, conferring certain privileges, which entail certain corresponding duties. There is an outward sign of the covenant. In that made with the Hebrews it was circumcision. In the Christian covenant, it is baptism. In that made to Noah and all succeeding generations of men and every living creature, it is the *rainbow*. *I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud, and I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.* The thought is more beautiful than even that of the Greeks, to whom the rainbow was either a bridge for the descent of Iris from heaven to earth, or the brilliant scarf that clothed her shoulders.

The Sons of Noah.—Noah had three sons, SHEM, HAM, and JAPHET, who were to be the fathers of the future human race. One of these, Ham, disgraced himself, and with his son Canaan received a curse, instead of the paternal blessing pronounced on Shem and Japhet. Thus are typified in him the character and fortunes of his descendants.

The generations of Shem, Ham, and Japhet are given in Genesis x., but their enumeration is geographical, that is, it follows geographical lines. We have before us, as it were, a descriptive chart on which the various countries and cities of the known world are arranged genealogically. Thus, roughly speaking, the three sons of Noah are represented by three zones.¹ The northern embraces all the Japhetans, who in turn are severally enumerated from north to south. The central zone is that of Shem; but genealogy gave way to geography, so that the Semitic Zidonian, the Mongoloid Hittite invader from the far north, and the Amorite, with his fair hair and blue eyes, are all associated under a common title as children of Canaan, son of Ham. But this common title made them sons of Canaan in a geographical, not an ethnological sense.

The Sons of Japhet.—GOMER, the Gimirra of Assyrian

¹ Sayce, *The Higher Criticism and the Monuments*, p. 121.

Texts, were the Cimmerians of Herodotus,¹ who had been driven by the Scyths from their original homes on the Dniester and the Sea of Azof, and had attempted to enter Assyria. Defeated by Esarhaddon, they were forced to turn westward into Asia Minor. MAGOG is explained by some as the "land of Gog," i.e. of Gyges, king of Lydia. MADAI are *Medes*. JAVAN is the scriptural form of "Ionian." TUBAL and MESHECH were known to Greek geographers as Tibareni and Moschi, and were located in Asia Minor, near the Black Sea. Of TIRAS and the sons attributed to Gomer nothing positive is known. The sons of Javan tell their own tale. In ELISHAH we may perhaps read Hellas. TARSHISH or Tartessus takes us to the neighbourhood of Gibraltar in Spain. KITTIM and the RODANIM (see R.V. marg.) denote respectively Kition (Larnaka) in Cyprus and the people of Rhodes.

The Sons of Ham.—CUSH represents Kash, the Egyptian name for the districts south of the First Cataract. MIZRAIM, the biblical name for Egypt, is a dual, meaning "the two Matsors." Matsor was the Hebrew name of the great fortification which ran across the isthmus of Suez, and protected Egypt from the attacks of its eastern neighbours. PUT (or PHUT) was some district in Egypt under Ionian influence, since Nebuchadnezzar speaks of defeating the soldiers of Phut of the Ionians. CANAAN is in place here, because it was at one time an Egyptian province.

In this southern zone we find placed Dedan, Sheba (Sabœa), and Havilah, the two latter in another passage (Gen. x. 29) being placed in the central or Semitic zone.

Nimrod.—The mention of Nimrod here is due to a confusion between Cush (Kash) and the Kasi or Babylonians. Nimrod was not a geographical term. He was proverbially *a mighty hunter before the Lord*, and from Babylonia he carried his conquests north into Assyria. *The beginning of his kingdom was Babel* (Babylon), *Erech* (Warka, on the left bank of the Lower Euphrates), *Accad* (in North Babylonia), and *Calneh* in *Shinar* (South Babylonia). The cities which Nimrod built in Assyria are really parts of the monster place we know as Nineveh, and may be identified with the village and mounds of Nimrūd and Kujundshik (Calah and Nineveh), and with Ri-isini (Spring-head). Rehoboth-ir has not yet been identified.

¹ Hdt. i. 15.

The sons of Mizraim were the various nationalities who obeyed the rule of the Pharaohs. Some of them, as the LUDIM, or Lydians, the PHILISTINES, and the CAPHTORIM (Cretans), were foreign mercenaries.

ZIDON, the earliest Phœnician city, is given to Canaan as his firstborn. HETH (the Hittite) is his son because Hittite invaders had made Kadesh on the Orontes their capital. The various tribes of Canaan (to be noticed afterwards) follow. Of the geographical names that succeed the Hivite, Arka, Sin, Arvad, and Zemar were towns of Northern Phœnicia; Hamath was on the Orontes. The rest are introduced to mark the southern limits of Canaan.

The Sons of Shem.—It is with the geography of the central or Semitic zone that we are most concerned. Here we have the ELAMITES, the Semitic ASSYRIANS, and the ARAMEANS, ARPACH-SHAD, another name for Babylonia, and the enigmatical LUD. In EBER we have at least the first suggestion of the word Hebrew. The other names mentioned, with one or two exceptions, are at present little more than names.

The Tower of Babel.—Philology has shown that languages very unlike each other may yet have had a common origin. It is a fascinating study to try to trace them back to a single source, and discover when and how the different streams diverged. The Hebrews had a philological tradition which made the tower of Babel the starting-point of the various dialects of the Eastern world.

That tower, to the eyes of nomads, unaccustomed to cities, may well have looked like a projected staircase to heaven. The name *Babil*, or *Babilu*, means in Babylonian "gate of God," but it bears such a resemblance to the Hebrew verb meaning "confound," to make it natural for the writer to connect it with the confusion of tongues. *And the LORD said, Behold, they are all one people, and they have all one language; and this is what they begin to do: and now nothing will be withholden from them, which they purpose to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.*

What political or social revolution is represented in this story we do not know; but whatever catastrophe stopped the progress of the building (of the *city*, not the tower) and scattered the people, it is certain that the inevitable changes

which language undergoes would soon make the different sections of what had been one society with one speech, but was now dispersed, unintelligible to each other.

VIII. THE NOMAD CHIEF

GEN. xi. 10-xii.

All countries are my Father's lands—
 Thy sun, Thy moon, doth shine on all ;
 We may in all lift up pure hands,
 And with acceptance on Thee call.

The Family of Shem.—The family of Shem, which was to be the line of promise, is enumerated twice over, one genealogical tree carrying the succession on to PELEG and JOKTAN, the two sons of EBER, the other through Peleg down to the foundation of the Terachite clan to which Abram belonged. The first of these is geographical, like that of Ham and Japhet. Thus beginning at the south-east with ELAM, the ancient name of part of the country we know as Persia, the list proceeds in a north-westerly direction through ASHUR, or Assyria, to the Lydians (if LUD indicates Lydia) in Asia Minor, and then turns south to ARAM, or Syria, with the contiguous districts, Uz, or the Hauran, Hul, or El Huleh, about the lake of Merom, and Gether, or Iturea.

The geographical plan is then abandoned for a more strictly genealogical method, which also is that of the second account of the Semites in chapter xi. The purpose of the writer is made clear by the words: *And unto Shem, the father of all the children of Eber*, Eber being regarded as the ancestor of the Hebrews, from whom directly or indirectly they received that name. The name appears in Numbers xxiv. 24 in connection with Ashur; and whether it was a place or a personal name, it indicates the locality of the Hebrews' ancestral home, a country on the other side of the river Euphrates.

Now these are the generations of Terah. Terah begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran begat Lot. . . . And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran, his son's son, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife; and they

went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there.

Ur-Chasdim is identified with the Uru of the Babylonian records, and is represented by the ruins of Mughair, that is, "Asphalt-town," lying on the western or right bank of the Euphrates, not far from Erech or Warka, a town of lower Mesopotamia.

From Ur to Haran.—From here to Haran (or Harran) the Carrhae of the Greeks and Romans, famous for the defeat of Crassus by the Parthians, is a journey of six hundred miles.¹ The caravan would cross the Euphrates from Ur into Mesopotamia, and then, taking a north-westerly direction, would ascend the course of the great river, pitching the tents each night, it may be, outside the walls of some city in that densely peopled region. Thus Larsa, the Ellasar of the Bible, Erech, and Calneh, and Borsippa, and Babel itself, would be passed, and all the magnificence of that ancient civilisation, its palaces and temples and towers and canals, would be gazed upon by the patriarch's eyes. The nomadic instinct would, however, lead them on and on, till at Haran in Padan-Aram, the plains stretching south from the highlands of Armenia, they would find all that a wandering Arab can desire. But, like Ur, Haran was a principal seat of the worship of the moon-god; and after the death of his father, a Divine impulse drove Abram forth to practise a purer religion in another land, and to preserve for the world a faith in one good and righteous God. *Now the LORD said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will shew thee: and I will make of thee a great nation: . . . and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.*

From Haran to Canaan.—The country to which Abram now directed his steps was that known from the name of the people then inhabiting it, as Canaan; to the Western nations, at a later time, as Palestine; to the Hebrews, as The Land of Israel (1 Sam. xiii. 19), or of Promise (Deut. ix. 28; Heb. xi. 9); to us, as The Holy Land. To reach it from Upper Mesopotamia, a caravan would cross the Euphrates, and advance in a south-westerly direction along what is still the main desert road to Syria, till its capital, Damascus, was reached. The only indication given in the Bible of Abram's halt in this delightful

¹ Geikie, *Hours with the Bible*, i, 320,

spot is in the name of his steward, Eliezer of Damascus. But from legends that linger round the locality we learn that the nomad chieftain must have had more than a passing acquaintance with Damascus. He bears in some historical notices the title of its "king," and a spot is still pointed out as his dwelling-place.

An Arab Caravan.—But like Mahomet, long afterwards, Abram was constrained to leave this delicious oasis, as no paradise for him. And once more the wanderer starts westwards. We can reproduce the picture, for it may be seen to-day. "The unchanged habits of the East render it in this respect a kind of living Pompeii. The outward appearances, which, in the case of the Greeks and Romans, we know only through art and writing, through marble, fresco, and parchment, in the case of Jewish history we know through the forms of actual men, living and moving before us, wearing almost the same garb, speaking in almost the same language, and certainly with the same general turns of speech and tone and manners. Such as we see them now starting on a pilgrimage or a journey, were Abraham and his sister's son when they went forth to go into the land of Canaan. *All the substance that they had gathered* is heaped high on the backs of their kneeling camels. *The slaves that they had bought in Haran* run along by their sides. Round about them are their flocks of sheep and goats, and the asses moving underneath the towering forms of the camels. The chief is there, amidst the stir of movement, or resting at noon within his black tent, marked out from the rest by his cloak of brilliant scarlet, by the fillet of rope which binds the loose handkerchief round his head, by the spear which he holds in his hand to guide the march and to fix the encampment."¹ So roam the Bedawin to-day. So, more than three thousand years ago, moved on those religious ancestors of ours, in obedience to the Divine call, to a land they did not know.

And they went forth to go into the land of Canaan, and into the land of Canaan they came.

The route followed was probably that leading to the ford of the Jordan near Bethshean, now Beisan, from which what is called the Great Northern Road would bring them to their first settlement in the Holy Land, Sychem, or Shechem, lying between Ebal and Gerizim, in the very centre of the land.

¹ Stanley, *Jewish Church*, Lect. I. vol. i. 11, 12.

IX. THE LAND OF PROMISE

Where is the land with milk and honey flowing,
The promise of our God?

The Canaanite, we are told, was yet in the land when Abram came to Shechem. *And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him.* What kind of land was it?

Syria.—"The great Arabian plateau (mentioned in Lesson i.) ceases nearly ninety miles from the Mediterranean, because an immense triple barrier is formed against it. Parallel to the coast of the Levant, and all the way from Mount Taurus to the Red Sea, there run two great mountain ranges with an extraordinary valley between them. These ranges shut out the desert, and, by help of the sea, charge the whole climate with moisture, providing rains and mists, innumerable fountains, and several large rivers and lakes. They and their valley and coast-land are Syria; Arabia is all to the east of them. The Syrian ranges reach their summits about midway in the Alpine heights of the Lebanons."¹

The Jordan Valley.—The part of Syria with which we have to do is all to the south of the Lebanons, where the great valley mentioned above, with the young Jordan in its embrace, begins to sink below the level of the sea. Due south it runs for some twenty miles before it opens out into the Lake of Galilee, 680 feet below the sea-level, and then for another sixty-five miles, always sinking to the Dead Sea, which is 1290 feet below. Well may the river of this valley be called the *Descender*. The depression (*Ghor*) continues, under the name Arabah, to the Gulf of Akabah.

On either side run two limestone ranges. The western of these is interrupted, as it trends southward, by the vale of Esdraclon,—though at one time it apparently bridged it over,—then rises again to send a lateral branch to touch the sea in Carmel, but in the main range continuing parallel to the Jordan valley. Scattering in Samaria into separate groups, it consolidates towards Bethel upon the narrow tableland of Judæa, with an average height of 2400 feet; continues to the

¹ G. A. Smith, *Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, ch. ii.

south of Hebron, where, by broken and sloping strata, it lets itself down, widening the while, on to the plateau of the "Desert of the Wandering." The district south of Judæa is the *Negeb*, "the Dry Country," but in our Bibles "the South."

The eastern range, of the same geological formation, though overlaid here and there by volcanic matter, divides into three great districts, Bashan, Mount Gilead, and Ha-Mishor, or the Plateau. The latter forms the country of Moab. The lower end of this range, perhaps indeed the range itself in its whole extent, was known to those who looked on it from the west of the Jordan valley as *Abarim*, "Those on the other side."

Reaching Palestine by sea, and starting, say from Joppa, to cross the country, the traveller passes between sandhills into the rich maritime plain, called the Plain of Sharon in its northern and Philistia in its southern part. To this succeeds the Shephelah, or the Lowlands, separated by valleys like that of Ajalon from the main range, the passes into which are generally steep and narrow.

The Country of Palestine.—It was but a little territory. The breadth of the country from the Jordan to the sea is rarely more than 50 miles. From Dan to Beersheba, the recognised limits on north and south, is about 150 miles. Had Abram ascended Ebal, which lay north of his encampment, he would have seen his inheritance to its full extent.

But the land to which he had been led was one in keeping with the great purpose of God, that to his descendants should be intrusted pre-eminently the religious history of the world. Shut in by desert and sea, and guarded by the Jordan trench and its mountain walls, it was a country fitted for a peculiar people, who, to reach their destiny, must dwell alone with their God. And yet it was the centre of the then known world, and on the lines of communication with the old-world empires. And it was not only its position which prepared it for its purpose. In natural features and in climate this little country is an epitome of the great world. Its combination of mountain and valley, plateau and plain; its interchange of fertility with barrenness, beauty with ruggedness; its differences of soil and differences of climate—make it, in some respects, homelike and familiar to a traveller, come whence he may. Of the Bible, which reflects its natural features, it has been said that it is at home in all lands. Even in the earliest

glimpses we have of it, Palestine appears as a land already occupied by a settled population, with towns and governments. An Egyptian speaks, even before Abraham's day, of its corn-fields, figs, vineyards, and fortresses. Another Egyptian, of a later date, but still earlier than the patriarch, speaks of it as "abounding in wine more than in water," of the plentifulness of its honey, and of its palms: adding that all its trees were fruit-bearing, and that it yielded barley and wheat, and had no end of cattle. As to its olives, they were so abundant that one district had an olive tree for its hieroglyphic sign.

Of the original inhabitants of the Holy Land little is known. Part of the country on both sides of the Jordan was held by a race of men known variously as the Rephaim, or Giants, the Emim, or Terrible Ones, the Zumzummims (perhaps = Zuzim. The meaning is unknown), the sons of Anak, and the Amorites, or Highlanders. The Amalekites, apparently an Arab race, lived in the extreme south. The Hittites in Palestine appear to have been a colony of the Khita, whose empire in North Syria was strong enough to defy the gigantic powers of Egypt and Assyria. The Perizzites, or "Dwellers in the open," were a peaceful people, living in quiet villages in Central Palestine. The name Canaanite was especially given to the Phœnician settlements in the Jordan valley, and on the lowlands bordering the Mediterranean. Other smaller tribes were the Hivites, the Jebusites, and Girgashites. The important people who gave their name first to the maritime plain, or Philistia, and then to the whole country (Palestine), will be noticed when they appear in the history.

X. THE WARRIOR CHIEF

GEN. xii. 8-xiv.

Blessed be the LORD, my rock,
Which teacheth my hands to war
And my fingers to fight.

From his encampment under the Terebinth, or Oak (wrongly in Authorised Version, "plain") of Moreh, Abraham, driven by drought to look for fresh pasture-grounds for his numerous herds,

moved towards the tableland of Judæa halting at Bethel, and then farther southwards, till absolute failure of rain drove him to Egypt.

Abraham in Egypt.—At that time Egypt seems to have had a welcome for Semitic settlers, for they had at least one flourishing colony at Zoan, and the tradition fixes the fault of Abraham's abrupt departure on his own conduct. The Pharaoh of the time, whether a king of the Twelfth dynasty, or one of the *Hyksos* or Shepherd kings, was disposed to be friendly. *Pharaoh* is not a name, but a title, meaning originally "palace." Applied to the monarch, it is as if our expression "The Royal House" should be applied to the reigning individual, and should become a permanent title.

The Egyptians had a far higher standard in regard to truth than the Hebrew race, which, with all its virtues, has always had a character for duplicity. In Egypt lying was held in abhorrence, as it is among us; and Abraham's falsehood in calling his wife his sister, which was as foolish and useless as it was wicked, was not calculated to bring him esteem there. The episode, we think, would make a deep impression on a mind so open to intimations of good as the Patriarch's; and probably the repetition of the disgraceful subterfuge reported of him later in connection with Abimelech, and then again in the case of Isaac, is due to the variations to which traditional stories are liable, especially when handed down orally from so remote a past.

At Bethel.—Abraham returned to Palestine by way of the Negeb, and chose Bethel as the joint encampment of himself and Lot. But there was not sufficient pasture for two such tribes to remain united, and when they separated, the uncle generously allowed his nephew the choice of district; but there was more than generosity in the act. Abraham's trust, which had wavered in Egypt, had come back stronger than ever. The narrative indicates it in the simple account of his return *unto the place of the altar which he had made there at the first; and there Abram called on the name of the LORD.* Henceforth he would wait for the touch of "the hand that guides" before making any choice. Lot made the common choice of what was fairest outside; and Abraham remained where the immediate prospect was less attractive, to have once more proclaimed the promise that had first brought him to the future Holy Land. And now he moved to what was to be his most permanent settlement.

At Hebron.—This was *by the oaks of Mamre*, the name of

an Amorite chief (xiv. 13) and of a locality (xxiii. 17), *which are in Hebron. There he built an altar unto the LORD.*

Chedorlaomer.—Abraham next appears in the character of a brave and skilful warrior. The records of Babylonia have discovered the fact that in the Patriarch's time Canaan formed part of the huge empire of an Elamite dynasty which had first conquered Babylon, and then extended its dominion westwards as far as the Mediterranean. Kudur, the Chedor of Genesis xiv., was a prefix of the members of this royal house, and it is possible that the name *Kulur-lagarma*, or *Chedorlaomer*, may yet come to light upon a clay tablet, for the last part of the name does exist as the name of a divinity. In fact, the name *Kudur-dugmal*, who appears on one tablet as an ally of *Eriaku* (Arioch) and *Tudghul* (Tidal), may, it appears, be read as *Kulur-lagarma*.

Abraham's Victory.—The Elamite monarch was on his return from punishing some refractory tribes. He was accompanied by three of his vassals or allies, Amraphel, king of Shinar, or Babylon; Arioch, king of Ellasar, perhaps the Eriaku of the Assyrian records; and Tidal, king of "nations," a puzzling title, which possibly should be read, "of the Guti," a people of northern Mesopotamia. Of the Rephaim, the Zuzim, and Emim whom they had conquered on their march south, we know little, except that they were wild tribes on the east of the Jordan. The Horites of Edom, or Mount Seir, were cave-dwellers, whose rocky retreats must have been difficult to attack. Marching up the Arabah, Chedorlaomer next fell on the tribes of Sodom and the other cities in the lower Jordan valley. *And they took Lot, Abram's brother's son, who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed. And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew.* He at once started in pursuit with three hundred and eighteen of his own slaves, and his Amorite friends, and coming up with the Elamites on what was afterwards the northern limit of Israel, fell upon them with such violence that he routed them and pursued them to Hobah, north of Damascus. Thus Lot and the other captives and their property were recovered.

On his return from this successful expedition Abraham was met by two kings. One was the grateful king of Sodom, to whom the Patriarch behaved with unexpected and surprising magnanimity, refusing his rightful share of the spoil.

Melchizedek.—The other was a figure fascinating as well by the mystery surrounding him, as by the excellence in the little we know. His name itself commands respectful awe: Melchizedek, “King of Righteousness.” Whence he came, from what parentage, remains untold, and even the place Salem of which he was king is uncertain, though the identification with Jerusalem is most probable. He appears for a moment, only to vanish from view altogether. No wonder that in Jewish times he was regarded as some remnant of the earlier world, Arphaxad, or Shem, or Enoch. “No wonder that, when in after times there arose One whose appearance was beyond and above any ordinary influence of time and place or earthly descent, no fitter expression could be found for this aspect of His character than the mysterious appearance of Melchizedek.” In him too were combined the kingly and priestly offices, and Abraham received his blessing, and *gave him a tenth of all.*

XI. THE FRIEND OF GOD

GEN. XV.

God will deign
To visit oft the dwellings of just men.

Hebron.—Hebron was, more than any other place in Palestine, Abraham’s home. It is still the home of his memory, called by the Arabs by the name they give to the Patriarch himself, *El-Khalil*, “The Friend.” It is a strange coincidence that the name *Hebron* itself comes from a root meaning “to associate,” or was derived from the *Khabiri*, i.e. “confederates,” from Gezer, Gath, and Keilah, who, we learn from one of the Tel el-Amarna tablets, took it from Pharaoh. Situated at the confluence of two exceptionally fertile valleys, it naturally attracted nomad tribes, who, from earliest times, flocked to it from all quarters, and soon grew attached to a settled life. It was Hebron’s boast to be more ancient than even the ancient Semitic settlement in Egypt, Tanis, or Zoan, but we have no clue to this date. The names Kirjath-Arba, that is, “City of Arba,” progenitor of the Anakim, and of Mamre, one of the Amorite chiefs that Abraham found there living side by side

with a Hittite colony, clung long to the spot. It became in later times David's capital; but it is the memory of Abraham that dominates over everything here, in the place which was the nearest approach to a home which he found in all his wanderings.

Abraham's Titles.—The various names and lofty titles by which this patriarch has been known present the pivots round which his history turns, and indicate the greatness and glory of his mission. As yet he has been ABRAM, "the father of elevation," or "the exalted father," unless we have here a contraction of *Abi-ram*, i.e. "my God (lit. father) is exalted." *Abi-ramu* has been found on ancient Arabian inscriptions. And as yet this man, known so long as "the father,"—he was now more than eighty years old,—had no child, no heir. The narrative notices the pathos of this. After the successful military exploit and his safe return to Hebron, the certainty and the continuance of the Divine protection was assured *in a vision*: *Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield*; after the refusal of the spoil, by the declaration, *and thy exceeding great reward*. And this is the reply of the man whom only fellow-tribesmen or slaves as yet called "father": *O Lord God, what wilt Thou give me, seeing I go childless, and he that shall be possessor of my house is Dammesek Eliezer? Behold, to me Thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house (that is, a slave) is my heir. And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir.*

Then he is bidden look up to that magnificent spectacle, a cloudless Eastern sky at midnight. *Look now towards heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to tell them; and He said unto him, So shall thy seed be.*

While he is alone with God, in the deep silence of the night, gazing on that starry host, such an insight into the boundless power and love of the Most High fills Abram's bosom that all doubts disappear, and he becomes, in anticipation, ABRAHAM, "the father (or, perhaps, chief) of multitudes." And to this, ten years later, his name is to be formally changed. In one expressive sentence the Bible tells how completely the Patriarch threw himself, clear of all his misgivings, upon the truth of God, a sentence which has been the starting-point of more than one great epoch in the history of religion. *And he believed in the LORD, and it was counted unto him for*

righteousness. True, he was not to stand long on this elevation of unclouded vision. Soon gloom, as in human life is inevitable, began to mingle with the brightness. The Patriarch asks for a sign, and it is given him, but not without the horror of a great darkness. The vicissitudes of his descendants are dimly foreshadowed; and though it is predicted that he shall go to his fathers in peace, and be buried in a good old age, the evil times to come are not concealed.

Trials of Abraham's Faith.—And in connection with the very beginning of this numerous posterity, difficulties and recurrent doubts are soon to show themselves. At first Ishmael, the child of the slave-girl Hagar, seems to be the promised heir, and the belief of this draws forth the pathetic prayer, *O that Ishmael might live before Thee.* Then when Sarah has her son Isaac, and Hagar—with the boy to be so wonderfully preserved to become the ancestor to whom the Arabs look back with pride—is driven away, there is to be a more severe trial of faith still, and the father is bidden to sacrifice the child of promise. All this was necessary to win the title, fixed upon him by St. Paul, “the father of the faithful.” Yet it is all here in one pregnant sentence. The moment may almost be called the birth-time of faith. Abram believed, and, in accepting with such confidence the destiny assigned him, became indeed the parent of all who believe, not only of Israel, but, as the apostle to the Gentiles maintained, of all the faithful in all the world and for all time.

The Friend of God.—There remains one more title, the most significant possibly of all, “the Friend of God,” given to him expressly in the New Testament (Jas. ii. 23), superseding, for the Mussulman portion of the world, every other name and title. As a friend he is visited by God, talks with Him, even expostulates with Him. No other word, indeed, will express so well the sense of intimacy we get from the account of the Divine communications, held nine times over with the Patriarch. And this so favoured one is not, as in pagan histories, a god, or a demi-god, or the son of a god. He is a mere man, an Arab chief. “The interval between the human and Divine is never confounded. Abraham is the ‘friend,’ but he is nothing more. He is nothing more, but he is nothing less.”¹ He was God’s “friend,” that

¹ Stanley, *Jewish Church*, Lect. I. vol. i. 14.

is, beloved, chosen, called by God. And God was his "friend," that is, the One he worshipped, and clung to for help and protection; the One to whom he was ready to surrender everything; the One for whose approval he waited and watched.

And the importance of this in the dawn of the religious life of the world cannot be overstated. A friend is one who stands fast when others fall away. It is to the inflexible steadfastness of the Hebrew race in its trust in one God, when everywhere else the tendency set strong for polytheism, that the world of to-day owes the purity of its faith. Nowhere is this trust better illustrated than in the cherished records of the greatest of the Patriarchs. Legend says of Abraham that he was again and again persecuted by his own countrymen in Mesopotamia, and even by his own family, for his departure from their creed. The following story indicates the temptations that must have been always exerting their influence to seduce him from his loyalty to one God:—"When night overshadowed him he saw a star, and said, 'This is my Lord.' But when it set he said, 'I like not those that set.' And when he saw the moon rising he said, 'This is my Lord.' And when the moon set he said, 'Verily, if my Lord direct me not in the right way, I shall be as one of those that err.' And when he saw the sun rising he said, 'This is my Lord. This is greater than the star or moon.' But when the sun went down he said, 'O my people, I am clear of these things. I turn my face to Him that hath made the heaven and the earth.'"¹

XII. ISHMAEL

GEN. xvi., xxi.

Many a languid prayer
Has reached Thee from the wild,
Since the lorn mother, wandering there,
Cast down her fainting child,
Then stole apart to weep and die,
Nor knew an angel form was nigh
To show soft waters gushing by,
And dewy shadows mild.

It is not surprising that, with the promise of a long race of

¹ Stanley, *Jewish Church*, Lect. I. vol. i. 17, 18.

descendants ringing in his ears, and his wife growing old, Abraham resorted to that polygamy which, in spite of its obvious evils, has ever maintained itself as an Eastern custom.

Sarah and Hagar.—Faith, though strong, does not to all natures bring the power of waiting. And Sarah seems to have been more impatient than her lord, and it was at her instigation that he took her maid Hagar to wife. And her jealousy when she saw her own design about to succeed was very natural. It became a proverb that the earth cannot bear a handmaid who is heir to her mistress. But the matter was in higher hands; and when the slave-girl fled from her mistress' persecution, she was warned back by a Divine intimation, accompanied with a prediction of the future of the child she was to bear. *And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael (God hears); because the LORD hath heard thy affliction. And he shall be as a wild ass among men, his hand shall be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.* The last clause refers to the geographical position to be occupied by the Bedawin, whose boundless love of freedom is aptly described in the likeness to the wild ass. Ishmael was to be the progenitor of the Bene-kedem, the children of the East, the Arabs of the desert, twelve tribes of whom the Bible makes to trace their descent from him. The Ishmaelites have continued to this day in possession of the extensive peninsula between the Euphrates, the isthmus of Suez, and the Red Sea.

Beer-lahai-roi, "the well of living and seeing," had its name from the fact that Hagar had had communication with God without dying, as her own exclamation shows. It lay in the Negeb, through which the Egyptian girl was trying to escape to her own country.

The Sign of Circumcision.—Abraham was eighty-six when Ishmael was born; and, thirteen years after, the covenant was renewed and its sign of circumcision appointed, when the name "Abram" was changed to "Abraham," and the promise made of a son by Sarai, now to be called Sarah (princess), of which the older form seems to be a Canaanite peculiarity. Thus Ishmael was thirteen when circumcised.

Departure of Hagar.—We hear nothing more of him till the occasion of the feast made at Isaac's weaning, when Sarah's

jealousy was again aroused at the sight of the lad taking part in the sports. The rendering *mocking* is a mistake. She proposed the expulsion of Hagar and her child from the encampment, and Abraham, though most unwillingly, and only at an express command from above, acquiesced. And once more the slave-girl took the road homewards through the desert. *And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, and the child (not necessarily also on her shoulder), and sent her away: and she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba. And the water in the bottle was spent, and she cast the child under one of the shrubs. And she went, and sat her down over against him a good way off, as it were a bowshot; for she said, Let me not look upon the death of the child. And she sat over against him, and lift up her voice, and wept. And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and saith unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? Fear not, for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in (or with) thine hand; for I will make him a great nation. And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink. And God was with the lad, and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer. And he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran; and his mother took him a wife out of Egypt.* Paran is the tableland to the west of the Arabah. Ishmael united with Isaac in burying their father, and died at an age of one hundred and thirty-seven. The Moslem Arabs, who speak with pride of their descent from Ishmael, say that he and his mother lie buried in the Caaba at Mecca. Hagar and Ishmael became, in early Christianity, a type of those Jews who in the bondage of literalism denied the freedom of the gospel which could admit the Gentiles to a share of its blessings.

XIII. THE CITIES OF THE PLAIN

GEN. xviii., xix.

Get ye up from the wrath of God's terrible day!
Ungirded, unsandall'd, arise and away!
'Tis the vintage of blood, 'tis the fulness of time,
And vengeance shall gather the harvest of crime!

By the terebinths of Mamre, somewhere in the neighbourhood of Hebron, Abraham sat in the tent-door in the heat of the day, to catch the passing breeze. Three travellers appeared; and as soon as he saw them he ran to meet them, and bowed himself toward the ground. With true Oriental hospitality he invited them to stay and take some refreshment—a *little water, a morsel of bread*. The invitation was accepted; and travellers tell us that to-day the meal that followed may be seen reproduced in every detail. *And Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah, and said, Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes.* “Our Arab guides and guards carried their food with them, not in the shape of baked bread, but in that of meal or flour. Soon as we halted a fire was kindled upon a smooth but somewhat hollow rock; all kinds of withered leaves and branches were heaped upon the flame. The stone, warm already from a whole day's sunshine having beaten on it, very soon got as hot as was required. Meanwhile the dough had been made and the cakes formed out of it. The embers and ashes, removed for a moment till the cakes were laid upon the stone, were then heaped over them. In a few minutes the baking was over; and when we tasted the product we no longer wondered that the Arab preferred new-baked bread.” Then from the herd he *fetched a calf tender and good*, which was given unto a servant, *and he hasted to dress it.* “A sheep or calf will be brought and killed before you, thrust instanter into the great cauldron which stands ready on the fire, and, ere you are aware, it will reappear on the great copper tray, with a bushel of cracked wheat or a bowl of boiled rice and curdled milk.”

The outward features of this scene were indeed, and are, of everyday occurrence in the East.

“This tent is mine,” said Youssouf, “but no more
Than it is God's; come in and be at peace;

Freely shalt thou partake of all my store,
As I of His who buildeth over these,
Our tents, His glorious roof of night and day,
And at whose door none ever yet heard 'Nay.'"

But Abraham found that he had been entertaining angels.

In this dim world of crowding cares
We rarely know, till 'wilder'd eyes
See white wings lessening up the skies,
The angels with us unawares.

The Doom of Sodom and Gomorrah.—The heavenly visitants came with a twofold object. One was to confirm the promise of a son by Sarah. The other was to warn the Patriarch of the doom about to fall upon guilty Sodom and Gomorrah. *And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do ; seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him ?* The promise gave him spiritual rights over all the world, but it was necessary that Abraham's conscience should confirm the Divine event. *For I have known him, that he will command his children after him to do justice and judgment.* Therefore must he be called in, as it were, assessor to the verdict pronounced on the guilty district.

The prayer of Abraham shows that he did recognise the righteousness of the impending doom, but also that he was perplexed by the difficulty of that ever-recurring problem, why the innocent should suffer with the guilty. Nature we expect to be pitiless in this regard ; but, believing in a just Will behind Nature, we often have to cry, with Abraham, *Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right ?* Such a union of the yearnings of compassion with the sense of justice and of profound resignation, such a sympathy with the calamities not only of his own countrymen but of a foreign and a detested race, must in that distant age be counted (to say the least) as a marvellous anticipation of a higher morality and religion, such as we are accustomed to think peculiarly our own.

What his feelings were when he got up early in the morning to the place where he stood before the Lord, and looked down and beheld, and lo, the smoke of the land went up as the smoke of a furnace, we are not told ; but in the safety of Lot he must have seen that his prayer was answered in spirit,

though not in the letter. Even when judgment overtakes the wicked, the righteous may often find a way to escape.

† **The Dead Sea.**¹—"Perhaps there is no region upon earth where nature and history have more cruelly conspired, where so tragic a drama has obtained so awful a theatre." It is true that, seen from far away, no lake on earth looks more blue and beautiful than the Dead Sea. But approach it, and a sense of violence and desolation reigns supreme. Over that mysterious hollow, close on 1300 feet below the level of the Mediterranean, an unnatural glow, like a funeral pall let down from heaven, seems to hang. In its deadly salt waters no fish can live; and therefore no sea-fowl skim its surface, though it is an exaggeration to say birds cannot fly over it. Its shores are ragged and torn, heaped with bitumen or hardened petroleum, and its gravel beach is crowned with an almost constant hedge of drift-wood, every part of which is stripped of bark and bleached, while much of it glitters with salt—"a proper crown for Death."

The Escape of Lot.—The cities of the plain, or rather the "circle," that shared the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah, were Admah and Zeboim. Zoar was exempted on the prayer of Lot, who, guided by angels, escaped thither with all his family, except his wife, who looked back and became a pillar of salt. Whether this circle of towns was at the southern or northern end of the Dead Sea is still matter of controversy.

The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered Zoar. *Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven. And He overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground.* In the petroleum districts of North America, where great reservoirs of oil and gas are formed, sometimes the gas explodes, carrying high up into the air masses of the oil, which falls back in fiery rain. Sometimes brine and saline mud are ejected, and tremors and subsidences take place. Such a phenomenon would account for all the statements of the scriptural narrative.

"The glare of Sodom and Gomorrah is flung down the whole length of Scripture history. It is the popular and standard judgment for sin. The story is told in Genesis; it is applied in Deuteronomy, by Amos, by Isaiah, by Jeremiah, by Zephaniah, in Lamentations, and by Ezekiel. Our Lord Himself employs

¹ G. A. Smith, *Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, ch. xxiii.

it more than once as the figure of the judgment which He threatens upon cities where the word is preached in vain, and there we feel the flame scorch our own cheeks. Paul, Peter, Jude, all make mention of it. In the Apocalypse the great city of sin is *spiritually called Sodom*."

XIV. SARAH AND ISAAC

GEN. XX.-XXIV.

What would you have of us? Human life?
 Were it our nearest, were it our dearest,
 We give you his life.
 The king is happy in child and wife;
 Take you his dearest, give us a life.

Birth of Isaac.—It was not at Hebron, but either at Gerar or at Beersheba, that the child of the promise was born, and received the name Isaac, commemorative of the incredulity which had led both father and mother to *laugh* when the announcement of his coming birth had been made and repeated.

The nomad chief had been attracted to Beersheba, no doubt, by its wells. It is, in fact, a cluster of wells, a pastoral camping ground, about twelve hours south-west of Hebron, on the extreme limits of what was afterwards the Holy Land, and one of its recognised boundaries.

Beersheba.—There are two different accounts of the origin of Beersheba. Of the two narratives which flow side by side, or blended together, in the Pentateuch, one attributes it to Abraham, the other, in very similar circumstances, to Isaac. The meaning of the name as it stands might either be the Well of *Seven* or the Well of (the) *Oath*; and in one passage both etymologies seem to be struggling for decision, though the latter prevails. Possibly "seven" and "oath" might have been almost interchangeable. Herodotus (iii. 8) mentions a form of swearing among Arabs in which seven stones have to be touched. We cannot wonder that the traditions should have become confused when both father and son were moving about in the same district in continual search for fresh pasture for their gigantic herds, and were both inevitably brought into relations with other pastoral tribes—relations not always friendly, and at least

such as to call for formal settlement of rights to wells. *Abimelech* was the chief or king of one of these tribes moving about Gerar, a place at the north-western extremity of the valley in which Beersheba lies. It was probably a reigning title, like *Pharaoh* and *Padisha*, having, in fact, either the same meaning as the latter word, "father-king," or being a compound of the name of the god Melech or Moloch. This facilitated the confusion in the tradition.

The bond of union between Sarah and her boy would naturally be exceptionally strong, and one little touch shows us that it was so. On Isaac's marriage we are told he was comforted after his mother's death, which he had mourned so long. We can, therefore, imagine her feelings at Abraham's resolution to sacrifice Isaac. But we only see into the father's mind.

The Spirit of Sacrifice.¹—"There have been in almost all ancient forms of religion, in most modern forms also, strong tendencies, each in itself springing from the best and purest feelings of humanity. One is the craving to please, or to propitiate, or to communicate with, the Powers above us, by surrendering some object near and dear to ourselves. This is the source of all sacrifice. The other is the profound moral instinct that the Creator of the world cannot be pleased, or propitiated, or approached by any other means than a pure life and good deeds." Even in heathen religions we find these two tendencies striving together. We see them presented in sharp contrast at the dawn of Hebrew story. There came, we are told, to Abraham the Divine intimation: *Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest, even Isaac, and . . . offer him for a burnt offering on one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.* "It was, in its spirit, the exact expression of the feeling of self-devotion without which religion cannot exist, and of which the whole life of the Patriarch had been the great example." A supreme trial of faith—this is the one feature on which Scripture, Old and New Testament alike, dwells. But we cannot but also see here a protest against the practice of human sacrifice, so deeply laid in the heart of the Canaanitish nations, and even in those Arabian tribes closely akin to the Hebrews, nay, ready often to show itself in the confines of the Chosen People itself. Had Abraham not obeyed the inner impulse, his faith would have been imperfect. Had the ram caught in the

¹ Stanley, *Jewish Church*, Lect. II. vol. i. 47-49.

thicket not been substituted in his son's place, as far as we can see, the dark sacrifices of the valley of Hinnom would not have created the horror they did, and the Hebrews might have continually given the *firstborn for their transgressions, the fruit of their body for the sin of their soul*, instead of ransoming it, as their law commanded. Mount Moriah witnessed a critical stage in the progress of the true religion. *Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh*, "the LORD will provide." Moriah was a name of Mount Zion when the Chronicler wrote. (2 Chron. iii. 1). There this great principle of religion was proclaimed. The sacrifice, the resignation of the will in the father and the son, was accepted; the literal sacrifice of the act was repelled. "On the one hand, the great principle was proclaimed that mercy is better than sacrifice—that the sacrifice of self is the highest and holiest offering that God can receive. On the other hand, the inhuman superstitions, towards which the ancient ceremonial of sacrifice was perpetually tending, were condemned and cast out of the true worship of the Church for ever."

On Isaac himself the event must have made a lasting impression. He was of a modest and retiring nature, a man of reflection more than of action, eminently devout and pious. But we have an indication how the one critical event in his life shaped his piety. God, who had been known to Abraham as the Most High, and who was to be the Strength or Fort of Jacob, was to him a Fear or Dread.

Death of Sarah.—The death of Sarah, at an age of 127, reminded Abraham that, though he had sojourned in four places in the land that had been promised him, he did not own in it enough for a grave. His encampment had moved back to Hebron, where his wife died, though the expression and *Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her*, suggests that he himself had been absent at the time. The children of Heth—a colony, it seems, of that great people the Hittites, or Khita, so frequently mentioned in Egyptian and Assyrian records—were there on friendly terms with the Hebrew tribe. From Ephron, their chief, the cave of Machpelah was purchased for 400 shekels of silver,—a mere trifle, as Ephron remarked, between such wealthy men,—and was conveyed to Abraham with all the formality of a modern legal transaction, *in the presence of the children of Heth, before all that went in at the gate of the city.*

And after this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of

the field of Machpelah ; and there, not very long after, Isaac and Ishmael laid their father, who had died aged 175 years.

Character of Abraham.—Abraham occupies so large a space in Old Testament history chiefly because of his importance in the history of religion. Not only was he the great example of faith, but he was able, with a true prophetic onlook, to believe that all future generations would be blessed in him. Our Lord Himself testified that he had *seen His day* (John viii. 56). He had anticipated, that is, the great truth of the universality of God's saving love.

But for his personal character, also, he deserves the tribute every age has paid him. As chief of a tribe, as a husband and a father, as a neighbour and a friend, he wins our admiration and esteem. No wonder that his descendants, regarding him at once in his relations to God and to his fellow-men, should speak of him as *incomparable in his generation* (Ecclus. xlv. 19) ; or that they have fabled of him that in Jeremiah's day, when the Temple had been destroyed, Abraham's form was seen over the ruins, his hands uplifted, pleading with God for the sons of his people led into captivity.

XV. ISAAC AND REBEKAH

GEN. xxiv.—xxvi.

Oh, friendly to the best pursuits of man :
 Friendly to thought, to virtue, and to peace,
 Domestic life in rural leisure passed.

Marriage of Isaac.—Isaac was too much bound up in his mother to think of taking a wife while she was alive. But after her death Abraham began to consider the question of his marriage. An alliance with a daughter of the Canaanites was not to be thought of, and the aged Patriarch's eyes naturally turned to his own country and his own kindred. The story of the quest for a wife is too beautiful to be told in any language but its own, and too long to copy. We do not read, as much as see, a vivid picture of Oriental life. We are present at the solemn oath, and witness Abraham's steadfast adherence to the promise. For Isaac himself to leave the land of inheritance would be, in his eyes, tantamount to a disbelief ; a fear not shared afterwards

by Isaac himself when he sent Jacob to the far East. We are struck by the well-known Arab trustworthiness. His promise once given, Eliezer, if it were he, will perform his mission to the letter. *I will not eat until I have told mine errand.* So, too, the characters of the other personages come out clear and life-like. Laban, so hard to bargain with, so calculating, but won over at once by the appeal to his one strong passion—by the sight of the nose-ring which had been put on his sister's face, and the bracelets on her arms. Rebekah, eager to receive, forward to go, her mind at once made up, all her faculties alert. The father, Bethuel, is altogether in the background. It was to Laban and the bride's mother that the costly presents, relic of the price anciently paid for the wife, were given. Nor can we overlook the first touch of what may be called sentimental feeling, at the close of the journey, when the mournful meditations of Isaac, by the well at eventide, are suddenly interrupted by the arrival of the bride. *And Rebekah lifted up her eyes; and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel. And she said unto the servant, What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant said, It is my master. And she took her veil (the loose wrap that could be drawn over the head), and covered herself. And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done. And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.*

Isaac's life has hardly any other side to it but the domestic. It was passed between the two homes, Gerar and Beersheba, with no excitement but that occasioned by the difficulties with the Philistine chief, Abimelech, over the wells.

The Philistines.—The Philistines, afterwards such powerful foes of Israel in their five famous cities, were still apparently lingering at the door of their future possessions, and had not yet surrendered their pastoral habits. On Egyptian monuments we first meet with them, under the name *Pulista*, in the reign of Ramses III. of the 20th dynasty, *i.e.* after the Exodus. It was about this time that the five cities passed from under the rule of the Pharaohs. But the migration of this people from the Delta, where, whatever their original home, they had undoubtedly settled, had apparently begun during the patriarchal age.

Isaac at Gerar.—If Gerar was a city, and not a district, it may possibly be where the maps usually place it, a few miles

south of Gaza, and not far from the coast. Isaac appears to have halted there on his way to Egypt, whither he was bound, to escape, in the usual way, from a famine. But he was stopped by a Divine command, accompanied by a renewal of the promise of a large posterity, and of Canaan as an inheritance. Rebekah had for a long while been childless, but her two sons were born now, and growing up. Her charms (Rebekah means "enchainer") led to a complication similar to that twice told of Sarah. Tradition seems uncertain where in the patriarchal story definitely to fix the incident.

Isaac and Abimelech.—In spite of Isaac's peaceable disposition, the Philistine shepherds regarded his tribe as such dangerous rivals that they tried to force them from the neighbourhood by stopping up the wells which Abraham had dug, and these had to be reopened. But this was resented; and all along the valley, from Gerar to Beersheba, the spite of his neighbours, and their determination to force a quarrel, which he is equally determined to avoid, are marked by the names given to the wells successively opened: *Esek* "contention," *Sitnah* "enmity," *Rehoboth* "room." Finally, Isaac finds the blessing of the peacemaker by the old familiar well or wells of Beersheba, where an oath of alliance between the chiefs puts an end to the long dispute, and rivets its name to the famous well.

A peace is of the nature of a conquest:
For then both parties nobly are subdued,
And neither party loser.

Death of Isaac.—Yet even for Isaac, Hebron, his father's favourite place, had attractions which drew him at last from his accustomed haunts, Beersheba and Lahairoi. Or was it, that as the end of his long life drew near, he wished to be close to the family burying-place, so as to ensure his resting there? At all events we are told: *And Jacob came unto Isaac his father unto Mamre, to Kiriath-arba (the same is Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac sojourned. And the days of Isaac were an hundred and four-score years. And Isaac gave up the ghost, and died, and was gathered to his people, old and full of days: and his sons, Esau and Jacob, buried him (Gen. xxxv. 27).* Even if the father's partiality for Esau had anything to do with the hostility of these two brothers, it was fitting that it should disappear into the grave of him who, ever gentle and patient, had held peace very dear.

XVI. ESAU AND JACOB

GEN. xxv. 19-34, xxvi. 34, 35, xxvii., xxxiii., xxxvi.

Take away God and religion, and men live to no purpose, without proposing any worthy and considerable end of life to themselves.

It is an excellent thing when men's religion makes them generous, free-hearted, and open-handed, scorning to do a thing that is paltry and sneaking.

Characters of Esau and Jacob.—Isaac's sons present a striking contrast alike in character and ultimate fortune. Esau, the shaggy, red-haired (Esau means *hairy*) huntsman, the man of the field, coming in weary from the chase, is caught, as with the levity and eagerness of a child, by the sight of the lentil soup. *Feed me, I pray thee, with the red; this red* [margin]. It was just the incident to create a nickname; and *Edom*, "red," became a designation of the lad and his descendants after him. What did he care at the moment for the privileges of his birth-right? Why should he look beyond the present? Yet, so full of generous impulse is he, so frank, so open-handed, so chivalrous, that it is to him our heart warms, while for the mean and crafty Jacob we feel at first nothing but indignation. *Is he not rightly named Jacob* ("the Supplanter"), *for he hath supplanted me these two times?* This play on words and names is a very favourite habit with Hebrew writers. Some scholars think *Jacob* is a contraction of *Jacob-el*, a form found on an Egyptian monument, a compound with El or God (like *Ishmael*). In this case a different sense must be given to the verb part of the name, "He who follows God step by step." For the duplicity of the second act Rebekah must take the greatest share of blame. *And Rebekah spake unto Jacob her son, saying, Behold, I heard thy father speak unto Esau thy brother, saying, Bring me venison, and make me savoury meat, that I may eat, and bless thee before the LORD before my death. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to that which I command thee.* But when Jacob hesitates, it is not from fear of doing what is wrong, but only from fear of detection. *Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man. My father peradventure will feel me, and I shall seem to him as a deceiver; and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing.* And he goes through with

the plot, lying with the utmost complacency, and even using religion to help the deception. *And Jacob said unto his father, I am Esau thy first-born ; I have done according as thou badest me : arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me. And Isaac said unto his son, How is it that thou hast found it so quickly, my son ? And he said, Because the LORD thy God sent me good speed.*

But this estimate of the two brothers changes as we proceed. In Jacob the baser elements will still continue now and again to show themselves ; but a struggle also shows itself, gradually resulting in the triumph of the nobler part. "The substance, the strength of the chosen family, the true inheritance of the promise of Abraham, was interwoven with the very essence of the character of the quiet man dwelling in tents—steady, persevering, moving onward with deliberate settled purpose through years of suffering and of prosperity, of exile and return, of bereavement and recovery. While the mere impulsive hunter, with all his natural endowments, from the want of aim, of purpose, of religion, vanishes away, light as air : *he did eat and drink, and rose up and went his way : so Esau despised his birthright.*"

The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews (Heb. xii. 16) calls him a profane person, that is, a man of low views, without any appreciation of any high or Divine thing, and makes him a type of remorse that cannot become repentance. Indeed, in that great and exceeding bitter cry, *Bless me, even me also, O my father !* there is the pathos of an impossibility. What had been rejected could not be recovered. Still, even for Esau there is a future, and a blessing in that future. *Behold, of the fatness of the earth shall be thy dwelling, and of the dew of heaven from above ; and by thy sword shalt thou live, and thou shalt serve thy brother ; and it shall come to pass when thou shalt break loose, that thou shalt shake his yoke from off thy neck* (a true prediction of the fortunes of Edom).

And he might have what many have felt sweeter than an inheritance, revenge. *And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him : and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand ; then will I slay my brother Jacob.* He had a nobler revenge later on.

Esau's Wives.—Esau had married at the usual age in that family, forty. In spite of Isaac's example of loyalty to one wife, polygamy was spreading, and Esau took two wives of the

Hittites, which were *a grief of mind unto Isaac and Rebekah*. He now tried to remove that unfavourable impression by allying himself with the Ishmaelite branch of the family.

When Esau moved southwards to the district to be so closely associated with him, is not quite clear. From Gen. xxxvi. 6 it looks as if his migration took place after Jacob's return. But in Gen. xxxii. 3 we read *Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother, unto the land of Seir, the field of Edom*. There is much confusion about his wives; but one of them seems to have been of the family of Anah, one of the Horite, or Troglodyte, chiefs of the country afterwards called Edom, who is remembered as the discoverer of some hot springs (Gen. xxxvi. 24).

The Land of Edom.—Mount Seir, “the rugged land,” or Edom, “the red land,” both names preserving natural features of the country, stretches southwards from the Dead Sea to the Gulf of Akabah, on the east of the Arabah, or defile, which continues the gorge of the Jordan. The name Edom extended itself later to the west, and in its form Idumæa designated the whole district immediately south of Judæa.

The Horites of Edom.—Of the older inhabitants we have a slight glimpse in Gen. xxxvi. They were cave-men. They were divided into clans, each of which had its recognised head or chief, distinguished probably for military prowess, and therefore not unfitly represented by the word *duke* or *dur*.

At the head of the whole was a king. A complete dynasty is enumerated of the kings that reigned in the land of Edom, before there reigned any king over the children of Israel.

Whether the dynasty of eight kings presently mentioned were Horite or Edomite, that is, Esauite, is a question for the settlement of which there is nothing but the statement: *These are the kings that reigned in the land of Edom, before there reigned any king over the children of Israel*.

There is no record of the conquest, if it was a conquest, of the old inhabitants by Esau's tribe, nor is anything told us of the end of the shaggy hunter.

XVII. THE WANDERER

GEN. xxviii.—xxx.

There is a hand that guides.

The deception had succeeded ; and Rebekah had secured for her favourite son the blessing which he was to pass on to his posterity and the world, for man's evil is often overruled for good.

There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will.

Departure of Jacob.—The sacred narrative dwells only on this Divine shaping, without a word of condemnation of the base means. But it shows retribution at work. The mother and son have to part, never to see each other again. Esau had not concealed his determination of vengeance, and his threat reached Rebekah's ears. *And she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said unto him, Behold, thy brother Esau, as touching thee, doth comfort himself, purposing to kill thee. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice ; and arise, flee thou to Laban my brother to Haran. And tarry with him a few days, until thy brother's fury turn away.* The few days were to extend to over twenty years ; and Jacob was to find that the family talent for craft, which had served him and his mother, was to be used against him by his uncle.

Isaac was easily led to acquiesce in Jacob's departure, on the plea of the danger of a marriage with one of the daughters of Heth. He dismissed his son with the solemn repetition to him of the blessing of Abraham.

And Jacob went out from Beersheba, and went towards Haran. The first halt that the narrative mentions reveals to the wanderer his future destinies. The sun went down, the night gathered round. He was on the central thoroughfare, the hard backbone of the mountains of Palestine. The ground was strewn, as travellers describe it to-day, with wide sheets of bare rock. Here and there stood up isolated fragments, like ancient Druidical monuments. With a stone for a head-rest, he lay down on the bare ground ; and in the visions of the night the rocks shaped themselves into a vast staircase (the word "ladder"

is misleading), on which were seen ascending and descending the angels or messengers of God.

How oft do they their silver bowers leave,
To come to succour us, that succour want !

Jacob at Bethel.—And from above there came the Divine voice, which told the houseless wanderer that, little as he thought it, he had a Protector there and everywhere. *And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the LORD is in this place ; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place ! this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven. And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone which he had put under his head, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it.* This was the first step in the Patriarch's upward progress ; and though he made a bargain in his prayer, the prayer was very sincere.

Such was the origin of the name Bethel, "The House of God," a name that has since spread to every holy place throughout the world. Such consecrated stones were to be met with all over the Semitic world, in Babylonia, in Syria, in Arabia. The Caaba, or old sacred stone of Mecca, still remains an object of reverence to the pilgrims of Islam. Jacob's Bethel seems to have been just outside the Canaanite city Luz, and may have been already a Canaanite sanctuary. Abraham had built an altar in the neighbourhood, and it was to play a great part in Jewish religious history. Jacob himself, on his return, reconsecrated it with even more solemnity than marked its present anointing.

Jacob and Laban.—*Then Jacob lifted up his feet, and came into the land of the children of the East, the Bene-Kedem.* An exquisite idyll tells of the meeting with Rachel at the well, and the welcome in the old land of his fathers. Bethuel is dead, and Laban has succeeded, the true type of the hard-hearted, grasping sheik of an Arabian tribe. With him begins the long contest of cunning and perseverance, in which true love at last wins the day. *Seven years he served for Rachel ; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her.* But, tricked as he had himself tricked, he finds he has married Leah, who had not her sister's bright eyes ; and seven more years, and yet another seven he serves, a hard service, but one that he makes profitable.

XVIII. WATCHFIRES OF ANGELS

GEN. xxx. 25-43-xxxv.

And all the spangled host keep watch in squadrons bright.

These twenty years have I been in thy house: I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters and six years for thy flock: and thou hast changed my wages ten times. Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the Fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely now hadst thou sent me away empty. So Jacob spoke to Laban.

The Children of Jacob.—In spite of the hard terms of his uncle, he had contrived to grow very rich. An expression of his own, marking his great change of fortune, is recorded. *With my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two companies.* He was the father of a numerous family, eleven sons and one daughter. Of these, REUBEN, SIMEON, LEVI, JUDAH, ISSACHAR, ZEBULUN, and a daughter DINAH, were born to Leah. Rachel's slave-girl Bilhah had borne him DAN and NAPHTALI; Leah's maid Zilpah, GAD and ASHER; while Rachel, after long waiting, had given him one son, JOSEPH. There were apparently more daughters, not named.

Jacob's Flight.—Jealousy between the two families under these circumstances was inevitable. Jacob's cousins thought their father had been overreached, and Jacob became aware of their suspicions. It was plainly time for him to go. Nor was a higher purpose than the wish to escape wanting. He felt himself called back to the Land of Promise. *And the LORD said unto Jacob, Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred, and I will be with thee.* With the entire concurrence of his wives, who felt that their father had made too good a bargain out of them, for their husband had paid far more than the usual price for a wife, he stole away while Laban was busy shearing. *So he fled with all that he had; and he rose up, and passed over the River (Euphrates), and set his face toward the mountain of Gilead.*

Laban went in pursuit, chiefly to recover his *teraphim*, wooden images, employed in some way in divination, which

Rachel had purloined and now managed to elude the search after them. The two chiefs, after some altercation, came to terms, and a pillar and cairn of stones with a Hebrew (*Galeed*) and an Aramaic name (*Jegar-sahadutha*), with the same meaning, "heap of witness," marked the limit beyond which neither tribe must in future pass, and witnessed the agreement.

And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. And Jacob said when he saw them, This is God's host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim, that is, "two Hosts." "The name was handed on to after ages, and the place became the sanctuary of the Transjordanic tribes. The Patriarch was still on the heights of the Transjordanic hills, beyond the deep defile where the Jabbok, as its name implies, 'wrestles' with the mountains through which it descends to the Jordan. In the dead of night he sent his wives and sons and all that he had across the defile, and he was left alone; and in the darkness and stillness, in the crisis of his life,—for Esau must be faced, and was already, with four hundred men, on his way to meet him,—in his agony and fear for the issue of the morrow, there wrestled with him One whose name he knew not until the dawn rose over the hills of Gilead."¹ In that struggle, in that seal and crown of his life, he wins his new name. (Another tradition places this Divine communication at Bethel.) *Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel; for thou hast striven with God and with men, and hast prevailed.* The dark, crafty character of the youth, though never wholly lost,—for Jacob he still is called, even unto the end of his days,—has been by trial and affliction changed into the prince-like character of his manhood.

Was it in material shape that the mysterious combatant met Jacob, or have we the record only of a spiritual experience? If the latter, it left more than one outward mark behind it—the changed name, the sinew that shrank, the place Peniel or Penuel, "The face of God," for *I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.* And on language, too, for *to wrestle in prayer* passed into religious speech. *He had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him* (Hos. xii. 4), is the comment of the prophet Hosea. And in

¹ Stanley, *Jewish Church*, Lect. III. vol. i. 66.

modern times this aspect of the story finds its best application in the noble hymn of Charles Wesley—

Come, O thou Traveller unknown,
Whom still I hold, but cannot see !
My company before is gone,
And I am left alone with Thee :
With Thee all night I mean to stay,
And wrestle till the break of day.

Yield to me now, for I am weak ;
But confident in self-despair :
Speak to my heart, in blessings speak ;
Be conquered by my instant prayer.
Speak ! or thou never hence shalt move,
And tell me if thy name be Love.

My prayer hath power with God ; the grace
Unspeakable I now receive ;
Through faith I see Thee face to face :
I see Thee face to face and live !
In vain I have not wept and strove—
Thy Nature and Thy Name is Love.

XIX. JACOB—ISRAEL

GEN. xxxiii., xxxv.

Men may rise on stepping-stones
Of their dead selves to higher things.

Gilead.—Gilead, the district in which the crisis of the Patriarch's life took place, consists of high forest ridges between the river Jordan and the desert separating the two great plateaux of Moab and Hauran. But when it comes to details, the impossibility of identifying the places whose associations make them so interesting is tantalising. For instance, the scene of the parting of Laban and his nephew, variously called Galeed, Jegar-sahadutha (Witness-heap) and Mizpah (Watch-tower), is unknown. There are several Mizpahs (or Mizpehs) east of the Jordan. Peniel itself is doubtful, and also Succoth (booths), Jacob's encampment after parting with Esau.

The Jabbok.—The certainty is the Jabbok or Yabbok. Rising on the edge of Moab, this stream at first tries to make for the desert, then turning northwards, it fetches a wide

compass north-west, cuts in two the range of Gilead, and by a very winding bed flows into the Jordan. The wide opening in the hills where it meets that river can be seen from Gerizim, and through it the road runs straight to Shechem.

Meeting of Esau and Jacob.—It was this road Jacob's huge caravan naturally took after Esau's departure had left him free to go on. The meeting of the two brothers had been characteristic of both. Esau, as usual, acting only on the generous impulse of the moment, *ran to meet him and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him*; Jacob provident, cautious, suspicious, approaching with Oriental ceremony, bowing himself seven times to the ground, and not before elaborate arrangements had been made, and every precaution taken against possible surprise and attack. It was only with much pressing that Esau could be prevailed on to accept his brother's present, on which Jacob had relied to turn away the resentment that only existed in his own sense of what he deserved. And though we cannot doubt the sincerity of the tears which he mingled with Esau's, still we see that he was not quite easy till the last of his brother's wild horsemen had disappeared. He was too afraid of them to accept them as an escort.

Jacob at Shechem.—Indeed, he did not need it. He *came in peace* (or *in good condition*) to Shechem, not now an uninhabited place or grove, as in Abraham's time, but *the city before*, i.e. east of which, his encampment was pitched. And he came not merely as an Arabian wanderer, but as a settler. He bought the parcel of ground on which he had spread his tent, paying for it, not now as Abraham had done, in silver weighed with scales, but with a hundred coins, *kesitah*, coins bearing the oldest of all coinage marks, a lamb. *And he erected an altar there*, and called it El-elohe-Israel, "El is the God of Israel." And there, although forty bright springs are in the neighbourhood, he digged, as we know from the incident which has made it the most sacred of all holy wells, a well which still bears his name.

It was one of his many precautions, lest the stronger and hostile inhabitants of the cultivated valley should be able, in spite of its abundance, to cut off his water supply. For all did not go on peaceably. The treacherous sacking of Shechem, with its slaughter of all the men, speaks at once for the number of Jacob's people, and the fierce and cunning dispositions of

some of his sons. And there may have been other wars ; for in the words of the dying Patriarch to his son Joseph there seems to show itself the expiring flash of the spirit of an ancient conqueror : *Moreover, I have given thee one portion above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow* (Gen. xlviii. 22).

The Burning of the Teraphim.—Either in peace or war, Jacob might have forgotten the religious purpose of his life had not a Divine intimation summoned him away to Bethel, the scene of his earliest vow. He had to be recalled to the house of God. And some preparation had to be made for this. We have a glimpse of the superstitions that mingled with purer elements in the faith of the time. There were other *teraphim* besides those of Rachel, and idols or strange gods, with amulets of various kinds. We must not expect either the theology or the religion of such early times, even among the ancestors of a chosen people, to be free from error and imperfection. But one of those frequent reformations that meet us throughout the Bible took place now. The Patriarch had all idolatrous images and ornaments collected and buried under the oak of Moreh. He consecrated Bethel anew by an altar, on which a libation and oil were poured.

Death of Deborah.—And here, in a spot that so vividly recalled his early days, and the home from which he had fled, is broken the last link which survived between him and his mother, whose face he was to see no more. It is told with a touching simplicity, through which we seem to see into a very loving and loyal heart. *And Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died ; and she was buried below Bethel, under the oak ; and the name of it was called Allon-Bacuth, that is, "Oak of Tears."*

XX. THE COAT OF MANY COLOURS

GEN. xxxvii.—xxxix.

Now I feel

Of what coarse metal ye are moulded—envy.

Birth of Benjamin.—It is with the latest portion of Jacob's life that are most closely interwoven those cords of natural and domestic affection which so bind his name round our

hearts. After burying his mother's old nurse at Bethel, he advanced yet a day's journey southward. The caravan drew near to a place then known only by its ancient Canaanite name, and now for the first time mentioned in history, Ephrath (or Ephratah), *the same is Bethlehem*. The village appeared stretched along its narrow ridge, but they were not to reach it. *There was still some way to come to Ephrath; and Rachel travailed, and she had hard labour. . . . And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing (for she died), that she called the name of the child Ben-oni, "son of my sorrow"; but his father called him Benjamin, "son of the right hand."* And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath. And Jacob set up a pillar on her grave: *the same is the Pillar of Rachel's grave unto this day*. The pillar has long disappeared, but its memory has remained; and a rude cupola, under the name of Rachel's tomb, still attracts the reverence of Christians, Jews, and Mussulmans.

Beside the watch-tower of the flocks (*Eder*), in the same region where, centuries afterwards, there were still shepherds *abiding in the fields, watching their flocks by night*, Israel spread his desolate tent; and onward he went yet again to Hebron, to bury his father in the cave of Machpelah, and to linger a while in a spot sacred from so many associations. Rachel's loss he never got over, and henceforth her two boys have the first place in his heart.

Joseph.—Joseph, the elder of these, had been born in Haran, and was now seventeen. He had evidently given already evidence of capable qualities, and it was not mere favouritism that led his father to trust him on errands so far away from home. The wealth in flocks and herds of the patriarchal family is indicated by the fact that, while the home was at Beersheba, in the extreme south, they were scattered nearly over the whole of Western Palestine in search of pasture. Despatched to Shechem, the lad finds his brothers have gone still farther north, to Dothan, a place whose ruins, still bearing their ancient name, are visited by travellers, who praise the luxuriance of the pasturage around it. The name may possibly mean "two cisterns," its proper form being Dothain.

His brothers easily recognised Joseph at some distance by his dress, the *ketoneth passim*, that is, shirt or tunic of pieces; probably, like those worn by the Semitic strangers depicted on

the tomb at Beni-Hassan in Egypt, robes of white, red, and blue, apparently made of a patchwork of separate small pieces; or, as others explain, it may only have differed from the ordinary shepherd's smock in reaching to the ankles instead of only to the knees, and in the finer quality of its material. At all events it made the wearer conspicuous; and to be thus distinguished often leads to jealousy and envy. The dreams, too, indicating, as Jacob himself perceived, some kind of superiority in his favourite son, and the fact that his father sent him to observe their doings, had made Joseph an object of dislike.

Joseph sold into Egypt.—Happily, however, for the lad, all the brothers were not equally bad, and Reuben, though his first purpose of ultimately releasing him failed, was yet the means of saving his life. *The pit*—evidently, as the article shows, well known; probably one of the stone cisterns giving its name to Dothan—was just now empty. These receptacles so often served for the detention of prisoners that the word *Bor* came to mean prison. The historical road from Egypt to the east of the Jordan and Damascus passes by Dothan, and is still a caravan route. Whether Midianites, descendants of Abraham by Keturah, or Ishmaelites,—for the confusion comp. Judg. viii. 24,—they were carrying to Egypt the very drugs and spices found named in papyri, or still redolent in mummy cases. They were glad to add to their chance of profit by a little slave traffic; and the brothers had no difficulty in getting rid of the boy without taking his life, while it was an easy device to make the old father think his son had fallen a victim to wild beasts. Perhaps they had not fully realised all the anguish they must cause. *And Jacob rent his garments, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days. And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave to my son mourning. And his father wept for him.*

And in the mysterious ways of God, who turns even human crime to Divine ends, that son was even now on his way to write one of the most important pages in the history of Israel, and therefore of the religion of the world.

And the Midianites sold him into Egypt unto Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's, and captain of the guard. This was no

doubt at Memphis; and Potiphar, a name meaning "Dedicated to the Sun-God," whose worship had its great centre close by at On (Heliopolis), was probably what we should call "Head of the Police," having a charge which was a semi-military appointment, and a post of much power and dignity.

XXI. THE FATHER OF PHARAOH

GEN. xxxix.-xli.

In vain they smite me—men but do
 What God permits with different view :
 To outward sight they wield the rod,
 But faith proclaims it all of God.
 Unmoved then let me keep my way,
 Supported by that cheering ray
 Which, shining distant, renders clear
 The clouds and darkness thronging near.

Joseph and Potiphar.—Who was the Pharaoh at the time Joseph was brought as a slave to Egypt has not yet been settled; but whether it was Ra-saquenen of the seventeenth dynasty, or Apepi of the sixteenth, his residence was most probably at Memphis; and in the household of Potiphar there the Hebrew lad was placed, and by his many attractive qualities, and by the capacity and fidelity which he brought to every duty assigned to him, *he found grace in his master's sight, and he made him overseer over his house; and all that he had he put into his hand.* Egyptian paintings show us such major-domos, a rod or a writing tablet in hand, and a pen to take down the number of easks, or sheaves, or cattle. Everything was strictly counted in an Egyptian household. Joseph's conduct was so blameless and his management so successful, that Potiphar could only ascribe it to Divine guidance. *And his master saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand.* So, little by little, his confidence became so entire that he interfered in nothing except his food. The Egyptians considered all foreigners unclean, and would not eat with them. Herodotus (ii. 41) tells us how no native of Egypt will use the knife of a Greek, or his spit, or his cauldron.

Potiphar's Wife.—But a terrible trial was at hand. With a

profligacy for which her countrywomen were notorious, Potiphar's wife tried to seduce Joseph from the path of piety and virtue, and, on his resistance, accused him to her husband, who threw him into prison. The poor slave might well think now that his early dreams had been delusions, and that the God of his fathers had marked him out, not for honour and dignity, but only for disgrace and ruin. And yet it was by means of the insight into the meaning of dreams that his own deliverance and the salvation of his race was to come.

In the prison, as in Potiphar's house, Joseph found grace, and inspired confidence. The jailer soon made the care of the other prisoners over to him. Among them were two high court functionaries, the king's head cup-bearer and the chief of his bakers. Both had the high responsibility of protecting the sovereign from poison, the former especially having constant access to his person.

The Interpretation of Dreams.—There is abundant evidence in Egyptian records of the importance attached in that country to dreams. They were not then

The children of an idle brain,
Begot of nothing but vain phantasy.

In the Museum at Cairo there is a pillar which was erected by a king to record a dream of the appearance of two snakes, one on his right hand, the other on his left, interpreted by his magicians to portend lordship over the North and the South. No wonder both the officers looked sadly on waking from dreams which they supposed could not be interpreted. *And Joseph said unto them, Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell it me, I pray you.* The clustering vine with three branches, the three baskets of white bread carried on the head,—a custom which Herodotus mentions, and which the monuments depict,—each pointed to the coming birthday of Pharaoh, when the cup-bearer would be restored to his office, the baker beheaded and impaled. *Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him,* leaving him to languish for two years in prison, until his skill as an interpreter was recalled by the ferment caused in Pharaoh's court by the incapacity of the magicians, or rather sacred scribes, men of that class whose fingers traced those hieroglyphics which have rendered up so many valuable secrets.

Joseph's Dreams.—The two royal dreams take us bodily into Egypt. The Nile is *The River*, needing, like the Euphrates far

to the east, no other name. In the first dream, seven—the Egyptian sacred number—well-favoured and fat buffaloes, which had been wallowing in the shallows at the edge, come to feed on the succulent reeds and sedges in which the cattle still delight, but only to be eaten up by seven others, ill-favoured and lean. The wheat of the second dream, with seven ears on the one stalk, is the mummy wheat still grown in the Delta; and the wind that blasted the other ears is the *Khamsin*, still dreaded by agriculturists. *And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, The dream of Pharaoh is one: what God is about to do He hath declared unto Pharaoh.* Seven years of plenty and seven years of famine,—those who heard knew at once that the Nile flood was to fail. There was no need to tell the means of the visitation. We know with what anxiety the Nilometers are watched to-day. The monuments speak of famines in the old times, possibly of this very famine foretold by Joseph.

The Father of Pharaoh.—*Now, therefore, let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath showed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art* (Gen. xlv. 8). And in a moment the poor Hebrew slave was exalted to the highest dignity, second only to Pharaoh. The Egyptian title of the supreme official of the court was Ab-en-Perao; in Hebrew ears it meant *Father of Pharaoh*. The signet-ring was transferred from the royal finger to his, the special golden neck-chain was put round his neck, and he was dressed in the fine linen robes of the priestly order, the highest class in Egypt, while before him heralds cried *abrech, abrech*, also an Egyptian word with a Hebrew equivalent of similar sound, and either expressive of loyal service or meaning “Seer.”

XXII. THE MEETING OF THE BROTHERS

GEN. xlii.-xlv.

O my brother!

The wrongs I have done thee stir afresh within me.

The Famine.—*And the seven years of famine began to come, according as Joseph had said: and there was famine in all*

lands ; but in all the land of Egypt there was bread. . . . And Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold unto the Egyptians. First they brought their money. That exhausted, they bartered their cattle for corn, then their land and their own persons. Joseph's ideas were truly Oriental and despotic, and he used the necessity of the Egyptian people to rivet the bond that bound the subject to the throne. The people only recovered the use of their lands and the right to labour for themselves on the condition of paying a tax of 20 per cent. But Turkey and Persia are to-day far more heavily taxed.

And all countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy corn, because that the famine was so sore in all the earth. And Joseph's ten brethren went down to buy corn in Egypt.

Joseph's Prosperity—Ephraim and Manasseh.—Twelve or thirteen years had passed since Joseph had been *stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews*, but he had now reached the height of prosperity. In addition to the insignia of high office which he wore, Pharaoh had given him an Egyptian name, *Zaphenath-paneah*, which is variously rendered ; “Saviour of the world,” “Governor of the abode of the Living One,” are two explanations. He had also given him a noble girl as wife, Asenath, daughter of a priest of On, who had borne him two sons, Manasseh (“making forget”) and Ephraim (“double fruitfulness”), names significant of his wonderful good fortune. Magnificently dressed and surrounded by pomp, it was not likely his brothers would recognise him.

Joseph tests his Brothers.—But he knew them, and longed from the first, we may be sure, to embrace them ; but it was necessary, first, to see if they had grown worse or better in disposition. Had Benjamin, perhaps, taken his place in their dislike and envy, and been murdered ? He could have taken no better course than to charge them with being spies. An invasion from the north-east was a standing danger to Egypt, and from the two great rival empires, the Assyrian and Hittite, an attack might any day come. But Israel's sons indignantly repelled the suggestion. Their attempt to prove their innocence by reference to their father and younger brother gave the opportunity required. And Joseph said unto them, *That is it that I spake unto you, saying, Ye are spies : hereby ye shall be proved : by the life of Pharaoh* (a most binding oath, surviving in Egypt in the twelfth century of our era) *ye shall not go forth*

hence, except your youngest brother come hither. The conditions were, however, relaxed, and only one was kept as a hostage in prison—not Reuben, the eldest, whose mercy for him Joseph remembered, but Simeon, the second in age.

Joseph could not sell food to his brothers, though they had sold him; and the incident of the money restored to the sacks adds a delightful touch to the romantic story. But mystery magnifies danger, as a mist does an object seen through it. *And when they and their father saw the bundles of money, they were afraid.*

Jacob and Benjamin.—Jacob's reluctance to send Benjamin was natural and extreme. Only the dire pressure of famine and the guarantee given by Judah at last overcomes the old man. And, once resolved, his old habit of trying to propitiate circumstances shows itself. It is an Eastern custom still in force not to approach the great without a present. A simple offering of what Canaan produced likely to be most acceptable in Egypt was chosen: *balm, gum tragacanth, pistachio nuts, ladanum, and honey*, or more probably thickened syrup of grapes, *debash*, still called *dibs* by the Arabs. Double money, in case the return of that first carried had been a mistake, was to be taken; and with these and Benjamin the brothers set out a second time.

And a new scene in the strange drama was about to open for them, for they found themselves invited to the great man's palace. *And when Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the steward of his house, Bring these men into the house, and slay and make ready, for these men shall dine with me at noon.*

Second Visit of the Brothers.—Not knowing why they had been introduced into the private house, which no doubt overawed them by its magnificence,—of which an estimate can be formed from the description of a villa built for himself by Amten, a high official nearly two thousand years before Joseph's time,—they were afraid, but their frightened appeal to the major-domo was met by assurances of safety and goodwill, and the release of Simeon. *And the man brought the men into Joseph's house, and gave them water, and they washed their feet . . . and they made ready the present against Joseph came at noon: for they heard they should eat bread there.*

A new mystery here met them, when they found themselves placed at table in the order of their seniority. But neither this nor the honour shown to Benjamin, by the mess *five times so*

much as any of theirs, led them to suspect that the magnate dining by himself in state apart from them and apart from the Egyptians, *because the Egyptians might not eat bread with the Hebrews*, was their injured brother. To what did they think this good treatment a prelude? We cannot say; but *they drank, and were merry with him*.

And next day they were returning home, proud of their entertainment, and anticipating their father's exultation at the safety of Benjamin, when they were startled by the hasty approach of the messenger and his stern summons to halt, that boded no good.

The discovery of the divining bowl in Benjamin's sack was the last test, and they stood it. Had they been of their old temper, by violence towards the boy they might easily have cleared themselves of complicity in the theft. But they were changed and ready to suffer, so that the old father at home got back his beloved son. There is nothing in literature finer or more pathetic than Judah's appeal. No wonder Joseph could no longer refrain himself.

XXIII. PATRIARCHAL BLESSINGS

GEN. xlv.-l.

The tongues of dying men
Enforce attention, like deep harmony.

Joseph makes himself known.—*And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren. And he wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard. And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence.*

They were troubled. The margin says *terrified*; and it was a natural terror. This great man, who by a word might enslave or kill them, was he whom they had sold. How will he persuade them that he is still a Hebrew, not an Egyptian—waiting for love, not revenge? He goes at once to the religious belief of the family. Even in their crime they had been ministers of the Divine purpose. *God sent me before you to*

preserve you a remnant in the earth, and to save you alive by a great deliverance. It is remarkable that we never hear of Divine voices calling Joseph, as they had called Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: as presently they will call Moses. He seems to have needed none but silent monitions. Like the child addressed by the poet, "God being with thee when we know it not," he saw the Divine guidance everywhere, and required no special manifestation. *So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and He hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and ruler over all the land of Egypt. Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not: and thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast.*

Pharaoh welcomes the Israelite Family.—Nothing has yet been discovered to shake the probability that the reigning prince in Egypt at that time was one of the Hyksos, or "Shepherd kings," who were themselves of Semitic origin, possibly Canaanites. It may therefore have been more than partiality for Joseph that induced Pharaoh to second his invitation so warmly. He would regard a pastoral tribe of Asia, not as enemies, but as friends, and possible allies against the foes of Egypt. Goshen lay between the cultivated land of Egypt and the Asiatic tribes of the eastern desert, and it was a land of pasture. The king even suggested the despatch of waggons, as well as abundant provision for the way, to facilitate the removal of the Israelite family. Without these visible proofs of the truth of their strange story the old man would never have believed his sons. *At first his heart fainted, for he believed them not. But when he saw the waggons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived: and Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die.*

They leave Canaan.—It was another crisis in Jacob's career, and it had strangely come towards the end of his life. He was 130 years old. The promise of Canaan as an inheritance to his family would seem to forbid a removal now; and without the express command given at Beersheba, after a solemn sacrifice, he may well have declined to set forth anew on his pilgrimage.

And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here am I. And he said, I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation: I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes. And, indeed, we see that Israel never could have grown into a nation in Palestine. A tribe the family might have become, living either in amity or at war with the many other tribes of the country, but to become masters of the land they must grow great elsewhere, and come as conquerors. At present, according to the Hebrew text, they numbered seventy; but in this number are included several yet to be born, the ten sons of Benjamin for instance. The Greek translators, followed by Stephen (Acts vii. 14), make the number up to seventy-five by including the sons of Ephraim and Manasseh.

The Land of Goshen.—Cautious still, Jacob sent forward Judah to ask Joseph to meet him in Goshen. This district, only just within the Egyptian frontier, was probably already inhabited by a pastoral people likely to be friendly. Its name survives in *Fakus*, the *Phakusa* of classical geography. On a modern map its southern limit may be looked for in the delta between Zagazig on the west, and Tel-el-Kebir on the east. On the north-east, we should gather from Josh. x. 41 and xi. 16, that it stretched far towards Palestine.

And Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel his father to Goshen; and he presented himself unto him, and fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while. And Israel said unto Joseph, Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, that thou art yet alive. Joseph impressed his brothers with the importance of appearing before Pharaoh in a pastoral character, to ensure the allotment of Goshen as a home, *for every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians*, and must therefore be excluded from the valley of the Nile.

From pictures on extant monuments we can almost reconstruct the scene of the introduction of Joseph's brothers to Pharaoh. He only presented five, a number greatly affected in Egypt, and adopted more than once by Joseph; and it is interesting to see on the Beni-Hassan tomb that the Semitic chief is there attended by this number of attendants.

Jacob blesses Pharaoh.—Then Jacob was introduced, and he

blessed Pharaoh. And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, How many are the days of the years of thy life? And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years; few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage.

And these years of mingled good and evil were drawing to a close. Nothing remained now for the Patriarch but to bless his children and die. Seventeen years, indeed, he lingered; and then, feeling his end near, sent for Joseph, and exacted from him an oath to bury him with his fathers.

And it came to pass after these things, that one said to Joseph, Behold, thy father is sick: and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. The interview is full of the most touching details. The old man recalls Rachel, his well-beloved, to her son, and tells him of her death and burial, and formally enrolls Joseph's sons in the family on an equality with his own. In blessing the lads he gives the pre-eminence to the younger, Ephraim, a forecast of the future history of the tribe bearing his name.

The Patriarchal Blessing.—It has often been remarked that as a man draws near to death, he gets glimpses into the future which are hidden from others—

The soul's dark cottage, battered and decayed,
Lets in new light through chinks that time has made.

And it may well be that, from his knowledge of his sons' dispositions and lives, Jacob was able to foresee much that was likely to reassert itself in the fortunes of their descendants. But the patriarchal blessing, as we have it, is generally regarded as a poetic reflection of an after time, put into the Patriarch's mouth; and, at any rate, its details belong to the future history of the tribes.

Death and Burial of Jacob.—Jacob's last words were a command to his sons to bury him in the cave of Machpelah; and they obeyed. The funeral would, in some of its details, resemble those depicted on Egyptian monuments. The corpse would be carried to the spacious embalming-houses outside the city, and left there forty days. Thirty days more had to pass, during which the mourners abstained from all amusements and luxuries,—even from the bath and from shaving,—and wore a

special mourning dress. The funeral procession would then be formed round the bier, shaped like a boat with runners. In front would go a group of women, beating their faces and wailing, preceded by a master of the ceremonies holding a papyrus roll. Our narrator only dwells on the size and illustrious character of the cavalcade. *And there went up with him both chariots and horsemen, and it was a very great company.* The courtiers and ministers of state accompanied Joseph and his slaves. The asses and vehicles of the pastoral tribe bore the *house* of Jacob—the children only remaining behind. Having reached the threshing-floor of Atad, the bier rested, probably for seven days (1 Sam. xxxi. 13; Judith xvi. 24; Ecclus. xxii. 12). Farther the Egyptian escort did not go, but the air resounded with the shrill lamentations peculiar to their funeral rites, while the nomads performed those dances with which even now the Arabs encircle the tomb of a departed chief. The scene of these funeral rites was known as “The Meadow of the Egyptians.” But *Abel* (meadow) resembles a verb meaning *to mourn*, and the historian does not lose the opportunity of playing on the word. Then the family continued its march with the embalmed body, which possibly still lies in the cave at Hebron, where it was deposited so long ago.

The Israelite Settlement in Goshen.—The rule of the Hyksos, “Pastors,” who made their way into Egypt from the countries in and to the west of Mesopotamia, began about 2100 B.C., and is thought to have comprised five dynasties, extending over about five hundred years. It was probably towards the end of this period that the Israelite settlement in Goshen began, and it may be dated about 1700 B.C.

XXIV. SERVITUDE

GEN. xlix. 15; Ex. i. 1-14.

A slow-developed strength awaits
Completion in a painful school.

And Joseph returned into Egypt, he, and his brethren, and all that went up with him to bury his father, after he had buried his father.

What would be the relations now between these brothers?

Forgiveness to the injured doth belong,
But they ne'er pardon who commit the wrong.

Joseph and his Brothers.—Nor can they easily believe themselves forgiven. The souls of Joseph's brothers were not generous enough to recognise his generosity. They thought it had been only the presence of their father that had kept him from his revenge. His great nature was subdued to tears when, afraid to approach him, they sent messengers to remind him of the prayer of the dying Jacob: *Forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of thy father.* He had forgiven it freely and entirely long before; and now, when they do come to him, he can but repeat his former statement: *As for you, ye meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones.*

Death and Burial of Joseph.—And with these fine words this blameless great man passes away from us. He lived a hundred and ten years. He saw his sons' children to the third generation. He took them to his bosom, fondling and petting them. Though a complete Egyptian in outward form, he was a true Israelite at heart. His body, when he died, was embalmed and put in a mummy-case, but he had taken an oath of his tribe that they should not leave it in Egypt. For he trusted the ancient promise, and saw that God would visit His people. The oath was performed, and Joseph was finally laid to rest in the piece of ground bought by his father at Shechem. There to this day, rightly or wrongly, his tomb is still pointed out, under the shadow of Mount Ebal.

With Joseph's life the Book of Genesis ends. We pass on to Exodus, which the Jews call from its opening, "These are the names," or simply "names." Its structure is essentially similar to that of Genesis, except that the two early works embedded in it cannot be so easily distinguished.

And we have come to a blank in the history impossible to fill up. And its duration cannot even approximately be computed. The LXX makes it 215 years; the Hebrew text double that period. Egyptian chronology suggests four or five centuries; a modern scholar would reduce it to one.

Reign of Thothmes III.—Indirectly, indeed, some light is

thrown on the fortunes of Israel from Egyptian history. In this period fell the reign of Thothmes III., the greatest monarch of that great eighteenth dynasty which made Syria tributary to Egypt. In his list of tribute-paying towns at Karnak occur 119 Palestinian names, and among them two which are read as Jacobel and Josephel, the former connected with Hebron and the south country, the latter with the *Har*, or the "Mountain," of Ephraim. It seems impossible not to recognise here reminiscences of the two Patriarchs, Jacob and Joseph, preserved in the localities associated with them in the Old Testament.

But opinions vary as to the relation between the longer and shorter names. Some think the longer to be geographical terms formed from the patriarchal names by the addition of *El* (God), possibly to denote sanctity. So *Jephthah* may have become Jiphthah-el (Jos. xix. 27, A.V.).

Others regard the longer as the original words; possibly tribal names which were shortened to Jacob and Joseph, as Israel appears shortened in Jashar, from which the poetical Jeshurun is formed (Deut. xxxii. 15, xxxiii. 5).

Attempts to settle in Canaan.—The kings of this dynasty appear to have left the Hebrews in peace, and even to have favoured them. Indeed, from casual notices in the Bible itself, we learn that Israelites, before the Exodus, had taken advantage of their favourable position to make settlements in the land promised to their race. Thus mention is made of an unfortunate expedition of the sons of Ephraim against the people of Gath, whose cattle they tried to drive off. Sherah, a daughter of Ephraim, is reported to have built the two Beth-horons and Uzzen-sherah (1 Chron. vii. 21–24). Shelah, son of Judah, seems to have taken part in the Egyptian Asiatic campaigns, making conquests in Moab (1 Chron. iv. 21, 22). It is even asserted by some scholars that the tribe of Asher moved as far north as Western Galilee, and settled there in the time of the Pharaoh Seti I., about 1350 B.C.

But in the fortunes of the Hebrews in Egypt two facts only emerge distinctly from the darkness: the rapid increase of these pastoral settlers, and the miserable change in their condition.

Prosperity of the Israelites.—*And the children of Israel (the Bene-Israel, as they now begin to be called) were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land, that is, of Goshen, was filled with them.*

And the friendly disposition of the reigning monarchs was changed to one of suspicion and dislike.

Rameses I.—Under the later kings of the eighteenth dynasty foreign customs and a foreign cult had prevailed in Egypt. But with the accession of Rameses I. of the nineteenth dynasty, about 1400 B.C., a reaction set in in favour of purer Egyptian ideas.

Now there arose a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph. And he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we: come, let us deal wisely with them; lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there falleth out any war, they also join with our enemies, and fight against us, and get them up out of the land. Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens.

There is extant a treaty made by Rameses II. with the Khita (or Hittites), with a clause alluding to fugitive subjects, who were to be sent back from Palestine, and hinting at a restlessness in the Semitic races still in Lower Egypt which needed to be rigorously repressed.

The Bondage of the Israelites.—Of the wretchedness of the servitude to which Israel was reduced we have indeed abundant proof, and also many illustrations. Egypt was known through all their after history as the house of bondage. It is said that, in comparatively recent times, from gangs of boys and girls set to work along the Nile, was to be heard rising the strophe and antistrophe of a melancholy chorus, "They starve us, they starve us—they beat us, they beat us," to which both alike reply, "But there's someone above, who will punish them well, who will punish them well." This, with but very slight changes, must have been the cry which went up from the Israelites by reason of their taskmasters.¹

Rameses II.—Brick making and building appear to have been the labours exacted from them. *And they built for Pharaoh store cities, Pithom and Raamses.* Raamses—there is a station on the railway from Suez to Cairo of the name—was named after Rameses II., a great prince of the nineteenth dynasty, whose mummy was discovered not long ago, and of whom a colossal statue, erected by himself in front of the temple of Ptah at Memphis, lies prone on the site of that city. His victories were confounded by the Greeks with those of Osirtasen or Usertasen I. of the twelfth dynasty, and hence they call him

¹ Stanley, *Jewish Church*, Lect. IV. vol. i. 85, 86.

Sesostris. He was a great warrior and a great builder. He was constantly at war with the Khita (Hittites) and other nations whose attacks would come from the North. His fear that the Hebrews might ally themselves with his enemies was therefore natural enough.

Pithom.—Pithom (the Patoumos of Herodotus II., 158) means "House of Tum" (the Setting Sun). It has been variously identified with Tel-el-Kebir,—the scene of Lord Wolseley's victory,—with Zoan or Tanis, now San, and, more recently and probably, with Tel-el-Mashkuta, where Naville found rectangular rooms, built of brick, which may be the treasure or store houses of Exodus. Of the royal names found there, that of Rameses II. is the earliest. And at present everything points to the conclusion that this prince was one of those in whom Israel found, not a protector, but an oppressor, though his treatment of them was no doubt more the result of policy than cruelty.

XXV. MOSES

Ex. i. 12-iv.

When the tale of bricks is doubled, then comes Moses.

Increase of the Israelites.—In spite of the hard treatment to which they were subjected, the Israelites increased rapidly. The more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and grew. An Oriental despot is not scrupulous as to the means which will effect his end; and the reigning Pharaoh determined to check the growth of this dangerous race by exterminating all the male children. And when the piety of the midwives interfered with his first plan, he gave orders that every boy born should be thrown into the Nile.

Birth of Moses.—A man of the family of Levi, who, we learn from a genealogy in Ex. vi., was called Amram, had married his aunt Jochebed, who had already borne him two children, Aaron and Miriam (Mary). A third child was born after the cruel decree, of exceptional beauty: so fair that in after times his beauty was described as divine (Acts vii. 20, margin).

For three months the mother managed to conceal the child

in her home. *And when she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch; and she put the child therein, and she laid it in the flags by the river's brink.* The bulrush was the celebrated *papyrus* reed which was used for so many purposes, notably for a writing material,—whence our word “paper,”—and for the construction of Nile boats, a custom alluded to in Isaiah xviii. 2.

Moses and Pharaoh's Daughter.—Presently Miriam, who had been posted to watch, saw a princess come down to bathe, and send her attendants to fetch the little boat. It was a moment big with destiny. What would Thermouthis, as we learn from Josephus was her name, do? *And when she had opened it, she saw the child: and, behold, the babe wept. And she had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrews' children.* How we love to follow the maiden hurrying to fetch the child's own mother to nurse it, and to imagine that mother's feelings when she clasped her little one, restored under such happy circumstances.

How bless'd to feel the beatings of his heart,
Breathe his sweet breath, and kiss for kiss impart;
Watch o'er his slumbers like the brooding dove,
And, if she can, exhaust a mother's love.

The princess adopted the child and gave him a name. It would naturally be an Egyptian name; and just as naturally the Hebrew historians would connect it with some word in their own vocabulary, which would also connect it with the incident of the preservation. Mos or Mosu, or, in another form, Mes or Mesu, meets us in Egyptian names like Amenmos, Thotmos, Amasis. Its meaning is “Son.” The Hebrews, referring it to a verb of similar sound meaning “to draw,” called it *Moseh* or *Mosheh*. The distinction between *s* and *sh*, marked in Hebrew only by a point, did not express itself in ancient times. The Greek *Moüses*, the Latin *Moyse*s, and our own *Moses* are nearly as close to the Egyptian as to the Hebrew form. The Greek form *Moüses* has led to a derivation from the Egyptian words *mo* (water) and *udshe* (saved), or from *mou* (water) and *shi* (taken). Josephus favoured the former of these, but both are now abandoned.

Moses' Life at Court.—For forty years Moses must be considered an Egyptian. In the Pentateuch this period is a blank.

But the words of Stephen's speech (Acts vii. 22), which describes him as *instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and mighty in his words and works*, are a brief summary of the traditions which fill up the silence of the Hebrew annals. According to these traditions, he was educated at Heliopolis, and grew up there as a priest, under his Egyptian name of Osarsiph (or, in other accounts, Tisithen). He learned arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, medicine, and music, and turned his science to practical account in great engineering works. Tradition also makes him a warrior, and sends him on an expedition to Ethiopia, whence he brought back victory, and a princess as a wife, a detail that finds some confirmation in the statement of Numbers xii. 1, that Moses had *married a Cushite woman*.

Flight of Moses.—But his heart was Hebrew. Seeing one of his race punished with the bastinado by one of the taskmasters, he slew the Egyptian, and the next day tried to make peace between two men of the Hebrews who strove together. His interference was resented, his slaughter of the Egyptian thrown into his teeth, and, fearing for his own life, he fled.

The story of an Egyptian refugee, Sinuhit, tells us where it was that one who wished to be beyond the power of a Pharaoh would naturally betake himself. After clearing the great wall that guarded Egypt on the north and east, he escaped to the *Shasu* (Plunderers), *i.e.* to the Bedawin tribes that roamed over the wastes to the east of the gulf of Akabah. Among these he found other political refugees, and was not only safe, but found himself honoured. Midian, in Minæan inscriptions *Mutsran*, falls under this term *Shasu*, and extends along the Gulf of Akabah southwards from Edom. Thither Moses fled, and there, like Sinuhit, he found friends and protection.

Providence brought him to a well where the seven daughters of a Midianite chief were accustomed to water their flocks, and, with his natural chivalry, he helped the maidens against some shepherds who were interfering with them.

The blending together of different traditions has produced a confusion as to the name of this Midianite chief, who presently was to play an important part in the organisation of Israel. He is variously called Reuel, Jethro, or Hobab. *Reuel*, or *Raguel*, means "friend of God," and may possibly be his title as priest, as he is here described, of Midian. Vexed at his daughters' want of hospitality to their protector, he sent them to bid him

come and eat bread; and a relation similar to that of Jacob with Laban sprang up between them, Moses becoming his shepherd, and doubtless, in lieu of dowry, giving his service for Zipporah, who became his wife, and bore him a son that he named Gershom, "a stranger here."

Reign of Meneptah.—The tradition followed by St. Stephen makes the stay of Moses in Arabia extend to forty years; and our narrative, by its expression, *it came to pass in the course of those many days that the king of Egypt died*, is in agreement with this. During the long and powerful reign of Rameses II. any idea of revolt against his tyranny was out of the question. But the reign of Meneptah (Seti II.), his successor, witnessed the commencement of reverses. Egypt soon became practically powerless beyond her frontiers, while at home she was a prey to moral decomposition. Man's necessity is God's opportunity; *and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of their bondage. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God saw the children of Israel, and God took knowledge of them.*

Moses at Sinai.—Whatever may have been the training provided by the wars or the wisdom of Egypt, it was in that austere and imposing region called the desert of Sinai, a school of solitude and of exile, that the mission of Moses was revealed to him. The long, silent preparation of forty years is gathered up by the sacred narrative into one momentous and characteristic incident. *Now Moses was keeping the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the back of the wilderness, and came to the mountain of God, unto Horeb.* Sinai and Horeb are variant names for one mountain, or mountain system, whose precise locality is unknown. The Old Testament connects it with Seir and Edom (Deut. xxxiii. 2), or with Teman, an Edomite name (Judg. v. 4, 5). St. Paul knows only that it is in Arabia (Gal. iv. 25). It is only since the third or fourth century of the Christian era that the name *Sinaitic* has become specially attached to the triangular peninsula between the Gulfs of Suez and Akabah. But it is the revelation, and not the spot where it was given, that is important. No matter where the bush burned, so that it burned for Moses; whence the voice came, so that he heard it.

The Burning Bush.—*And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I. And He said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. Moreover He said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.*

And then came the call, the commission to go to deliver the afflicted people, for which the time was now ripe.

Egyptologists give, as the beginning of the reign of Menepthah, about 1300 B.C.

XXVI. THE INEFFABLE NAME

Ex. iii. 14, 15, vi. 1, 2, 3.

They that know Thy Name will put their trust in Thee.

Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth (Num. xii. 3). Humility goes with greatness of soul. Like Isaiah, like Jeremiah, like Ezekiel, like all who really have the making of a prophet in them, he at first shrank from the glory of the task to which he was called. Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt? But the Divine promise of assistance does not fail in such moments. Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: when thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.

Elohim and other Names for God.—But another question was inevitable. *And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say unto me, What is His name? what shall I say unto them?*

The Patriarchs themselves had used more than one name. The fathers of all the tribes akin to the Hebrews had from time immemorial spoken of ELOHIM. The nomad Semites had originally, no doubt, imagined the world to be surrounded, penetrated, governed by myriads of active beings, each of whom

was an *Eloh*, but had no distinguishing name. But in the Bible *Elohim*, though a plural word, is treated as a singular, showing how theology had gradually purified itself, by defying syntax and insisting on a singular verb. *Elohim* has become *God*, the supreme Master of the universe. This is the word generally throughout the Old Testament rendered God.

But other designations were in use: EL, "Strong," and SHADDAI, "Almighty." Another name, or rather title, was ELYON, "Most High." Among kindred tribes were other names: BAAL, ADON, MELECH (or MOLOCH), CHEMOSH, but we have no record, as in Israel, of the moment of their adoption.

Then Egypt abounded in names of divinities. How far the religion of the settlers had become affected by what they heard and saw around them is a difficult question, but we know that the names of the sacred calves and bulls had a kind of fascination for them.

Another point of importance lies in the fact that Israel was now becoming a nation, and every nation had a special name for its deity.

A critical moment had thus arrived both in history and theology. Knowledge and thought do not stand still either in things of heaven or things of earth. We shall presently find Moses commissioned to say to Pharaoh: *Thus saith the LORD, Israel is My son, My firstborn* (Ex. iv. 22). Here is a new idea, requiring expression in theological language. And in Moses' mind, at least, the revelations made in desert musings had brought conceptions of the nature and character of God, never yet expressed in any name or title. But now a new name, and with it a new truth, was introduced.

Jehovah.—This is the name, wrongly pronounced *Jehovah*, more correctly *Yahveh* or *Yahweh*. Its precise meaning is still a matter of controversy, as well as its origin. "I am that I am. I am because I am. I am who am. I will be that I will be. I will be." All these are given in the margin of the R.V. But since the One so called is known as the "Lord of Life," "the Existent," "the Eternal," are the most adequate terms we can adopt for the new name. It puts God apart from, and above, all created being, and enthrones Him above the manifold world of sense, and therefore marks one stage in the revelation that was to consummate itself in the announcement,

God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in Truth.

The God of Israel.—But in religion, as in everything else, a fresh stage involves loss as well as gain. It is difficult to see how the revelation of a Universal Father could have come to the world in any other way than it has come : through the idea of a protecting God of Israel, watching over one nation, directing it and promoting its interests. But it is, in its exclusive sense, a narrow idea. A tutelary deity, in order to protect the tribe of his choice, must appear towards other tribes unkind and even unjust. We shall find much that may shock us in the Israelite conception of the God whom they now began to call by a proper name.

The name Jehovah only appears eight times in our English Bibles, though its abbreviation, *Jah*, occurs frequently, especially as part of proper names. Instead of it the word LORD, printed all in capitals, is used. The reason of this lies in the extreme awe in which the proper name was held, which prevented its pronunciation and directed the substitution for it of a word meaning *Lord*. In accordance with this, the Greek translation employed *Kurios*, and so prepared the way for the still nearer and closer revelation of God in Him whom we now emphatically acknowledge as “Our Lord.”

And they shall hearken to thy voice. Israel would accept the deliverer. But it would be very different with Pharaoh. *And thou shalt come, thou and the elders of Israel, unto the king of Egypt, and ye shall say unto him, Jehovah, God of the Hebrews, hath met with us : and now let us go, we pray thee, three days’ journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God. And I know that the king of Egypt will not give you leave to go, no, not by a mighty hand.*

It was said of the Duke of Wellington, that before an enterprise, he thought only of its difficulties ; but after making up his mind, he never thought of difficulty again. So Moses is to see at the outset what there is to overcome. But he has enough promise to make his courage strong. *And I will put forth my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in the midst thereof : and after that he will let you go. And I will give this people favour in the sight of the Egyptians : and it shall come to pass, that, when ye go, ye shall not go empty : but every woman shall ask of her neighbour, and of her that*

sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment : and ye shall put them upon your sons, and upon your daughters ; and ye shall spoil the Egyptians.

XXVII. SIGNS AND WONDERS

Ex. iv.-x.

He sent Moses, His servant ; and Aaron, whom He had chosen. They showed His signs among them, and wonders in the land of Ham.

Moses and his Mission.—But Moses still shrank from the gigantic task. Even the loftiest souls want the encouragement of some outward and visible manifestation that the noble purposes of which they have dreamed are possible. *And Moses answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice ; for they will say, The LORD hath not appeared unto thee.*

Three signs were granted to confirm his own faith, and to be credentials of the truth of his mission. His shepherd's staff, cast on the ground, would become a serpent. His hand, thrust into his bosom, would become leprous, and then again instantly clean. And if these failed, Nile water should become blood.

But a new cause of diffidence presented itself. Moses felt that he was no orator ; and to face Pharaoh and be silent would be useless ; to persuade the Hebrews without powerful words would be impossible. What could one slow of speech and of a slow tongue effect ? But here, too, he was shown how the Divine Providence had prepared for the Divine purpose. Aaron his brother was promised him as his spokesman. With these assurances Moses took leave of his father-in-law, and started towards Egypt with his wife and two sons. But, even as he went, the thought of the wonders that were to effect the great deliverance was overclouded with the sense that Pharaoh would harden his heart and would not let the people go ; and an incident is recorded of such a strange nature that we can only see that it indicates some difficulty that had arisen between husband and wife about the rite of circumcision. *And it came to pass on the way at the lodging place, that Jehovah met him, and sought to kill him. Then Zipporah took a flint, and cut off*

the foreskin of her son, and cast it at his feet; and she said, Surely a bridegroom of blood art thou to me. So He let him alone. Then she said, A bridegroom of blood art thou, because of the circumcision. From Ex. xviii. 2 it appears that Zipporah and the children did not proceed to Egypt, but were sent back to the encampment of Jethro.

Moses and Aaron.—Moses was still within the district known as the Mount of God when Aaron met him, and the brothers so long separated embraced. *And Moses told Aaron all the words of the LORD wherewith He had sent him, and all the signs wherewith He had charged him. And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel.*

Attitude of Pharaoh.—The two then made their first approach to Pharaoh, and, as usually happens, their first attempt at relief only made matters worse for Israel. Straw for the brickmaking had hitherto been supplied, but now the labourers had to collect it for themselves, and still turn out as many bricks. And yet Moses and Aaron had only asked to be allowed to lead the people three days' journey into the wilderness, to hold a religious meeting, and perform sacrifices impossible in Egypt, where the animals required for victims were sacred.

Servitude of the Hebrews.—The hard condition to which the Hebrews were now reduced is illustrated, if not actually represented, on extant monuments. A picture of the time has been preserved, in which prisoners of war are seen engaged at the various stages of brickmaking. Some carry water in jugs from the tank hard by, others knead and cut up the loam, others make the bricks in earthen moulds, or place them in rows to dry, others are building a wall. Nor is a taskmaster wanting, for the overseer watches the workers, the words "don't idle, the stick is in my hands," being painted on his lips.

They reproach Moses and Aaron.—Moses and Aaron suffered, as the saviours of men always have suffered. All the fault of the increased misery and injustice was laid at their doors. *And they met Moses and Aaron, who stood in the way, as they came forth from Pharaoh: and they said unto them, The LORD look upon you, and judge; because ye have made our savour to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to slay us.*

The Egyptian Magicians and the Plagues.—The king had professed ignorance of Jehovah, of whom Moses spoke, as his reason for refusing to let the people go to sacrifice. At a second interview, therefore, the sign of the rod changed to a serpent was exhibited to prove Jehovah's power. But the magicians, as Egyptian conjurors can do now, produced a similar wonder, though Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods, and the king was not impressed. *Plagues*, or strokes, therefore, took the place of mere signs—

1. The Nile water was turned to blood.

2. The land was filled with frogs.

3. Swarms of pestilent insects rose from the soil—lice, or, as some think, gnats or mosquitoes. This the court magicians, who had imitated everything hitherto, were unable to match, and confessed it to be the finger of God. But Pharaoh hardened his heart still.

4. Swarms of some kind of fly formed the next plague. The exact equivalent of the Hebrew word is unknown. Some think the dung-beetle, or *scarabeus*, held so sacred in Egypt, is intended. In any case, the plague was so intolerable that Pharaoh began to waver. He offered to permit the sacrifice to be held in Egypt itself, or even at a little distance; but he recalled the permission as soon as the trouble was over.

5. A murrain among all the beasts and cattle followed, though in the land of Goshen, as the king ascertained, not one beast of the Israelites died. He only hardened himself the more.

6. Accordingly, Moses and Aaron were ordered to take handfuls of the ashes of the furnace and sprinkle them up towards heaven; and *it became a boil breaking forth with blains upon man and upon beast*. The magicians had taken heart, and were disposed to try once more what their art could do; but the boils were too painful: *for the boils were upon the magicians, and upon all the Egyptians*.

7. A most destructive thunderstorm, with hail, succeeded, devastating all orchards, gardens, and cornfields where the corn was in ear, only the wheat and rye escaping. Pharaoh was so much alarmed that he acknowledged he had sinned, and begged Moses to intercede for him; but, the tempest over, he became as obstinate as before.

8. An unprecedented visitation of locusts followed.

9. A three days' darkness, so dense that it could be felt,

then stopped all movement and life in the land ; and Pharaoh offered to let the Hebrews, young and old, go, but without their flocks and herds. But Moses declared that not a *hoof* should be left behind ; and the monarch became obdurate once more, and even ordered the brothers out of his presence, on pain of death. *And Moses said, Thou hast spoken well ; I will see thy face again no more.*

These plagues are all narrated by the historian as miracles. We may perhaps regard them as miraculous applications of natural phenomena, for, in their degree, similar visitations have often afflicted, and still afflict, Egypt. At least those who have seen the *Red Nile*, as it is called, at a certain stage of its yearly rise, or have suffered from the frogs and flies and the dark khamsin, or dust storm, find no difficulty in realising the marvels of Exodus. The Almighty hand of God shows itself, not so much in the wonders themselves, as in their wide reach, their intensity, and the quick succession in which they came at the Divine command. And their horror is increased by "a knowledge of the peculiar character and customs of the country in which they occurred. It was not an ordinary river that was turned into blood : it was the sacred, beneficent, solitary Nile, the very life of the State and the people. It was not an ordinary nation that was overrun by vermin, and doomed to see the putrefying heaps lying by their houses : it was the cleanliest of all ancient nations, clothed in white linen, anticipating, in their fastidious delicacy and ceremonial purity, the habit of modern and northern Europe. It was not the ordinary cattle that died in the field, or ordinary fish that died in the river, or ordinary reptiles that were overcome by the rod of Aaron : it was the sacred goat of Mendes, the ram of Ammon, the calf of Heliopolis, the bull Apis, the crocodile of Ombos, the carp of Latopolis. It was not an ordinary land whose trees and crops were smitten : it was the garden of the ancient Eastern world. We have to think of the long line of green meadow and cornfield, and groves of palm, sycamore and fig tree, from the Cataracts to the Delta, doubly refreshing from the desert which it intersects, doubly marvellous from the river where it springs. If these things would have been *calamities* anywhere, they were truly *signs* and *wonders* in the land of Ham." ¹

¹ Stanley, *Jewish Church*, Lect. v. vol. i. 118, 119.

XXVIII. THE DELIVERANCE

Ex. xi.-xv.

See a disenchanted nation
 Spring like day from desolation ;
 To Truth its state is dedicate,
 And Freedom leads it forth.

It is the eve of the day which begins the history of Israel as a nation. *And the LORD said unto Moses, Yet one plague more will I bring upon Pharaoh, and upon Egypt ; afterwards he will let you go hence : when he shall let you go, he shall surely thrust you out hence altogether. Speak now in the ears of the people, and let them ask every man of his neighbour (the A.V. "borrow" is an error), and every woman of her neighbour, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold.* The interchange of presents is a recognised part of Oriental politeness, and it is by a touch of imagination that the historians represent the incident as a spoliation of their oppressors by a departing army. The actual state of things is implied by the statement that *the LORD gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's servants, and in the sight of the people.* So great a personage could not be allowed to leave the country without a number of rich presents, and, after all, what they took away would but be payment for the long years of forced labour.

"There are some days of which the traces left on the mind of a nation are so deep that the events themselves seem to live on long after they have been numbered with the past." Such was the night of the month *Abib*, or, as it was afterwards called, *Nisan*, which saw the departure of Israel from Egypt. *And it came to pass at the end of four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt. It is a night to be much observed unto the LORD for bringing them out of the land of Egypt : this is that night of the LORD, to be much observed of all the children of Israel throughout their generations.*

The Tenth Plague.—Moses had announced the coming stroke of doom, which should at last bring the deliverance, before he

went out from Pharaoh in hot anger. The Hebrews had also been prepared for it. The elders of Israel had been summoned to Moses, and directed to make preparations for the sacred meal to be presently described, and to mark every Hebrew door with blood, that the avenging angel might pass over it, on his mission of death to the Egyptians. "Then dimly we see and hear, in the darkness and confusion of that night, the stroke which at last broke the heart of the king and made him let Israel go." *And it came to pass at midnight, the Lord smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt, from the first-born of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the first-born of his captive that was in the dungeon; and all the first-born of cattle. And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead. And he called forth Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up, get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve the Lord, as ye have said. Take both your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone; and bless me also. And the Egyptians were urgent upon the people, to send them out of the land in haste; for they said, We be all dead men. And the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading-troughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders. . . And the Lord gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked. And they spoiled the Egyptians.*

From a surviving monument we learn that Meneptah lost during his lifetime a son "who sat on his throne," that is, was associated with him in the government.

The Passover.¹—In the feast of the Pesach, Pascha, or "Passover," the flight of the Israelites, its darkness, its hurry, and confusion, was acted, year by year, as in a sacred drama. Each householder assembled his family around him. The feast was within the house. The animal slain and eaten on the occasion was itself a memorial of the pastoral state of the people. The shepherds of Goshen, with their flocks and herds, could all furnish a lamb or a kid, *a male of the first year from the sheep or from the goats*. This was to be roasted whole, and served up with bitter herbs and unleavened bread.

¹ Stanley, *Jewish Church*, Lect. v. vol. i. 122, 123.

Night falls ; the stars come out ; the bright moon is in the sky ; the household gathers round, and then takes place the meal, of which every part is marked by the almost frantic haste of the first celebration, when Pharaoh's messengers were expected every instant to break in with the command, *Get you forth from among my people.* The guests of each household at the moment of the meal rise and stand round the table on their feet. Their feet, usually bare within the house, are shod as for a journey. Each member of the house holds a staff, as if for immediate departure ; the long Eastern garments of the men are girt up, for the same reason, round their loins. The roasted lamb is torn to pieces, each snatching in his eager fingers the morsel which he might not else have time to eat. Not a fragment is left for the morning, as if it would find them gone and far away. The cakes of bread which they break and eat are tasteless from the want of leaven, as if there had been no leisure to prepare it. And finally, the thanksgiving for the deliverance is always present. This character was stamped upon the ceremony by the wine-cups of blessing, and the long-sustained hymn, from the 113th to the 118th Psalm, of which the thrilling parts must always have been those which sing how *Israel went out of Egypt, and the house of Jacob from a people of strange language.*

The Paschal Feast.—And, alone of Jewish festivals, the Pass-over has outlasted the Jewish polity and overleaped the boundaries between the Jewish and Christian communities. The name of the Paschal feast, in the largest proportion of Christendom, is still the name of the greatest Christian holiday. The Paschal lamb has become for us symbolical of the greatest of all events. The Christian Eucharist, while it recalls a greater deliverance, still adds, every time it is celebrated, a new link to the ever-increasing historical chain that connects us as a Church with the Church of Israel, born on that momentous night, and connects us as individuals who love and reverence freedom with that emancipation of Israel.

XXIX. THE RED SEA

Ex. xiii.-xv.

Sound the loud timbrel o'er Egypt's dark sea !

Jehovah hath triumphed—His people are free.

Sing ! for the pride of the tyrant is broken,

His chariots, and horsemen, all splendid and brave,

How vain was their boasting ! the Lord hath but spoken,

And chariots and horsemen are sunk in the wave.

Numbers of the Israelites.—*And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand on foot, that were men, beside children. And a mixed multitude went up also with them ; and flocks, and herds, even very much cattle.*

This brief account implies a vast amount of previous preparation and of organisation, of which our narratives make no mention. If the number of men may be relied on as accurate, it may be computed that quite two million people were assembled under Moses.

Their Organisation.—But even if reduced to a hundredth part, the vast host would have been incapable of concerted action without long preparation. We have a glimpse of some organisation in the mention of *elders* and *scribes* or *writers*, which is the technical designation of the officers who superintended the gangs of workmen, as described in Ex. v. And we know, too, that the tribe was divided into families or clans, and these into households, each of which had its hereditary *scheik* or chief, and these again into subdivisions, named *households*. So that we can imagine how a large body might be quickly assembled at Raamses, the rendezvous, ready to march at a moment's notice, and gather up contingents from the other settlements as it proceeded. Indeed, a similar migration of Bedawin tribes from the very district occupied by the Israelites has been witnessed in our own days. In one night the whole population of the Wady Tumilat, in the Goshen of the Bible, decamped with their flocks and herds, rather than submit to taxation.

The Route to Palestine.—The direct route to Palestine, by Pelusium, was dangerous ; first, from the Egyptian troops guarding the frontier wall ; and secondly, because of the Philistine power. *And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the*

Philistines, although that was near ; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt.

Still, in all probability the march commenced in this north-easterly direction. We possess in the British Museum the account of a journey made from Raamses in pursuit of two fugitive slaves. It was written at least three thousand years ago, perhaps not long before the Exodus. The writer tells how he started on the ninth day of the third summer month, arrived on the tenth at Segol in Succoth, on the twelfth at Khetam, where he learned that the fugitives had turned in a south-easterly direction towards Migdol. We have here the very biblical names, and the very road of the Israelites. From Pithom their route followed what is now the Freshwater Canal. Succoth was a district or *nome* (Sethroitic), which received its name *Succoth* (tents) from its nomad settlers. Segol was between lakes Balâl and Timsâh. Khetam, or Etham, is identified with Tel-Defenneh on the Pelusiac branch of the Nile. Here fugitives without a pass would come in sight of the guarded wall, and turn in dismay to the south-east. The Israelites who had been sent away might have passed the guards and taken the old caravan route to Syria through the wilderness, but they dared not attempt it. They turned, therefore, but not without guidance. *And Jehovah went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way ; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light ; that they might go by day and by night : the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night departed not from before the people.*

The Pursuit.—And now we find them encamped before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, before Baal-Zephon. Here we come into a region whereon controversy still rages. *Migdol* means “tower,” and there were no doubt more places of the name than one, and Pi-hahiroth and Baal-Zephon still wait for satisfactory identification. We do not even know what *the sea* which lay to the east of the fugitives was : the Gulf of Suez, the Bitter Lakes, and the Sirbonic Lake, a long sheet of water to the east of Port Said, Milton’s

Serbonian bog,

Betwixt Damietta and Mount Casius,

have each a claim. All that is plain is that the Egyptians thought they had them an easy prey, shut in by sea and wilder-

ness, and the guarded line of towers to the north-east. Weeks, nay months, must have elapsed since the start; for Egypt, from king to meanest peasant, would be engaged in mourning and embalming their dead, a period demanding seventy days. Moses would make good use of this delay in organising his forces, but he could not turn them into brave warriors all at once; and when at last they heard that the horses and chariots of Pharaoh were in hot pursuit, they were sore afraid, and accused Moses of bringing them from that country of sepulchral monuments, to die and lie unburied in the wilderness. They knew not what a wonderful deliverance was at hand.

And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left. And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them, into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen.

Destruction of the Egyptians.—Vain pursuit! The heavy wheels sank in the sand and mud, and as the last of the flying Hebrews reached the eastern shore, Moses once more stretched out his rod, *and the sea returned to its strength when the morning appeared. . . . And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, even all the host of Pharaoh that went in after them into the sea; there remained not so much as one of them.*

XXX. AFTER THE DELIVERANCE

EX. xv.-xvii. ; NUM. xxxiii. 1-15.

Praise to the Conqueror, praise to the Lord,
His word was our arrow, His breath was our sword!—
Who shall return to tell Egypt the story.

Of those she sent forth in the hour of her pride?
For the Lord hath looked out from His pillar of glory,

And all her brave thousands are dashed in the tide.

Sound the loud timbrel o'er Egypt's dark sea!

Jehovah has triumphed—His people are free.

The Song of Triumph.—*For the horses of Pharaoh went in with his chariots and with his horsemen into the sea, and the*

LORD brought again the waters of the sea upon them ; but the children of Israel walked on dry land in the midst of the sea. And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand ; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously ; the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea.

The timbrels, or tambourines, were doubtless part of the spoil of the Egyptians ; and the dancing choir of maidens celebrating victory with song and dance—which became a Hebrew custom, as we see from the case of Jephthah's daughter, and the welcome given to Saul and David after the victory over Goliath (see also Ps. lxxviii. 25)—may also be traced to Egypt, where even now the young women dance out to greet the rising of the Nile.

The verse chanted also strikes the keynote of all Hebrew triumph. There was no pride of prowess in it. All glory is ascribed to God.

Whatever were the means employed by the Almighty, whatever was the path which He made for Himself *in the great waters, where His footsteps were not known*, it was to Him, and not to themselves, that the Israelites were compelled to look as the source of their escape. Other nations praised their own great captains and their own conquering hosts. The strain of Israel, the tone of all the national poetry, is this—

Jehovah is my strength and song.

Jehovah is a man of war ; Jehovah is His name.

Privations of the Israelites.—Alas for poor human nature ! Hardly have the strains of rejoicing died away when the deliverance is forgotten in the inevitable privation and suffering of such a march as was before Israel. Man is sensitive to his present misfortunes only. What he has suffered appears of small amount by comparison with what he *is* suffering. Hunger and thirst caused the slaves of yesterday to regret the onions of Egypt, and the life of relative abundance which they had enjoyed there.

So Moses led Israel onward from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur ; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water.

The Sea of Sûph.—The original, here translated “Red Sea,”

is "Sea of Sûph"; and from Deut. i. 1, Sûph appears to be a place in the land of Edom, not far from the head of the Gulf of Akabah, which is the water usually in the Bible called *Sea of Sûph* (Num. xxi. 4; 1 Kings ix. 26). The *Red Sea* was a much larger term, denoting all the seas washing the coasts of Arabia; whether the *Sea of Sûph* also had this large designation is doubtful. But Sûph means "weeds," and *sea of weeds* was a term applicable to any of the marshy lakes on the north-east of Egypt.

Shur and the Route of the Israelites.—The word Shur means "wall," and appears frequently as a well-known place between Palestine and Egypt, in phrases like *till thou comest to Shur over against Egypt*. But we are in entire ignorance of its locality; and the difficulty is increased by the fact that, in Numbers, instead of *Shur* the narrative gives *Etam*, which, we have seen, may be identified with *Khetam*, or Tel-Defenneh on the Pelusian Nile. The fact is, that from the time the Israelites reached the sea which they crossed till we find them on known ground at Ezion-Geber (Num. xxxiii. 35), all their movements are involved in uncertainty. We have a long list of camping-places, but where to place the names on the map we can only conjecture; and though to attempt to trace the wanderers is full of interest, it must be done with a mind held in suspense. We cannot put our finger even on Sinai. From Num. xxxiii. 10 we gather that the march of the first few days brought them to the Sea of Sûph, *i.e.* the Gulf of Akabah, but in what direction they had crossed the Sinaitic Peninsula is pure conjecture.

Three days' march brought them to bitter or salt pools, hence called *Marah*, "bitter," where the objectionable taste was corrected by infusing the water with a tree which the Lord showed Moses. The great leader seized the occasion for the first of his moral exhortations, *to hearken to the voice of Jehovah, and give ear to His commandments*.

Elim.—The name given to the next camping-ground, Elim, the great, or strong, trees, marks the excitement with which its seventy tall palms were seen after the scanty herbage of a rocky region.

The Wilderness of Sin.—The fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Egypt found Israel in the wilderness of Sin, clamouring for food, and regretting

Egypt, where they had *sat by the flesh-pots, and eaten bread to the full.*

The Gift of Manna.—*Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you. This bread was a small round thing, small as the hoar-frost on the ground. And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, What is it? (manhu), for they wist not what it was. The word man also means a gift; and from one or other of the words, between which there is a play, the new food was called manna.*

Of this each was to gather for his family a bowl (*omer*). The omer is not to be confounded with *homer*, which was a regular measure containing ten ephahs. The omer (or gomer), a common domestic vessel often used as a measure, was only a tenth of an ephah, or about five pints. Only, to avoid work on the Sabbath, twice the quantity was to be collected the day before. At all other times, if kept over a night it became uneatable. On the evening before the first appearance of manna a quantity of quails fell in the camp.

Water Famine at Rephidim.—At the next halt, *Rephidim*, “restings,” the scarcity of water made itself felt. The people turned on Moses as the author of their suffering. *Wherefore hast thou brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst? And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me.*

And the LORD said unto Moses, Pass on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go. Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. It was to be the answer to the despondent question, *Is Jehovah among us or not?* *Massah* “temptation,” and *Meribah* “strife,” became names of the place where the miracle occurred.

Battle with the Amalekites.—And now, according to the order of events in the narrative of Exodus, in whatever part of the peninsula they were, they came into collision with the most powerful of the nomadic tribes accustomed to wander over it, who would naturally resent the intrusion of a huge body of people like Israel. The Amalekites, closely related to the Edomites, but of uncertain origin, fell upon them while at rest

in the oasis. And here in their first battle, as at the crossing of the sea, Jehovah's might was shown and acknowledged. Moses, indeed, acted as a prudent leader. He picked out a body of fighting men and put them under the command of Joshua, of whom we hear now for the first time. But he betook himself to prayer on an eminence, and, with the rod in his hands, which were supported by Aaron and Hur, saw Amalek *discomfited with the edge of the sword*. And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. Jewish tradition identifies this Hur with the grandfather of Bezaleel of the tribe of Judah. And Jehovah said unto Moses, *Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven*. This may mark the beginning of the ancient book, "The Wars of Jehovah," quoted Numbers xxi. 14.

An altar, called *Jehovah-nissi*, commemorated the victory, for he said *Jehovah is my Banner*; and from the somewhat obscure verse that ends the chapter (Ex. xvii.), we may perhaps gather that a monument, with a *haul* upon it as an emblem of power, and especially of power to be directed against Amalek, was there set up. (See R.V. marg.) There is some reason for placing this struggle with Amalek, as well as the visit to Jethro, at a later period of the Wanderings.

XXXI. SINAI AND THE DECALOGUE

Ex. xviii.—xx.; DEUT. v.

And Power was with him in the night
Which makes the darkness and the light,
And dwells not in the light alone,

But in the darkness and the cloud
As over Sinai's peaks of old,
While Israel made their gods of gold,
Altho' the trumpet blew so loud.

Alliance with the Midianites.—A pleasant picture of peace and friendship follows immediately that of Israel's first experience of hand to hand conflict. Emboldened by the overthrow

of the rival nomad tribe of Amalek, that of the Midianite Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, made an alliance with the Hebrews, which was to be lasting with the Kenite branch of that tribe. It was an auspicious moment for the great leader, for it not only united him once more to his wife and sons, from whom he had been separated, but also, through the wisdom and experience of Jethro, enabled him to carry out a great reform in the organisation of the people. Hitherto the whole administration of justice among a numerous people, not yet become a nation, was in the hands of Moses alone, a burden which Jethro saw would soon wear out one man, however gifted.

Appointment of Judges.—He therefore advised him to delegate his judicial functions in all but the great matters to *able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating unjust gain*. Moses took the advice, and, organisation by districts being impossible, adopted a decimal system of divisions, by which even as few as only ten persons would have a recognised president or head to decide disputes.

And Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. And they judged the people at all seasons: the hard causes they brought unto Moses, but every small matter they judged themselves. Without some such preparation the work of legislation that was soon to begin would have been impossible. But now the camp at Rephidim might break up, and the host might advance to Sinai.

The Locality of Mount Sinai.—Where was Sinai "the jagged," or "Horeb the bare," as some narrators prefer to call it, the Mountain of God, an awful sacred peak, as all consent it was? Traveller after traveller has searched the peninsula to find a locality into which all the details preserved by the traditions will fit, and one after another has come away satisfied in his own mind, but unable to convince others. Indeed, for most of the details, touched as they are by poetry and imagination, and coloured by natural features common to the whole wondrous district, many spots present a suitable scene. The heights known as Mount Serbal, Jebel Mousa, Jebel Sena, Ras Sasafeh, by tradition, by peculiarities of position and structure, claim each—as the many Ægean islands claim the honour of Homer's birth—the glory of the giving of the law. Yet it is whispered by some scholars now, that we must look for the

sacred place, not in the peninsula at all, though for ever this must bear the name Sinaitic, but to the east of the Gulf of Akabah. To march straight across between the two gulfs and join the *Shasu*, Egypt's enemies, would be the natural course for fugitives from Pharaoh. To turn southwards and penetrate the peninsula would be to run against the garrisons which guarded the mines. They could not have passed without attracting the notice of the Egyptian troops. But we are left in ignorance of the line of march.

The interest of the question of the position of Sinai is absorbing; and yet how little it matters where that moment passed which saw the birth of the world's moral law, of those *Ten Words* in which, once and for ever, the religion and the genius of Israel enshrined, in form as firm and enduring as the granite slabs on which they were afterwards engraved, precepts of conduct at once so human and so divine.

Place of Sinai in History.—But Israel received more than a code of law at Sinai. They received a religion. This mysterious peak, which eludes the search of the explorer, became, as all after ages believed, the starting-point alike of their history and their faith. Their earliest poetry speaks of the manifestation of Jehovah as Israel's God, under the figure of a triumphant Divine march, which always begins at Sinai.

Deborah sings—

*Jehovah, when thou wentest forth out of Seir,
When thou marchedst out of the field of Edom,
The earth trembled, and the heavens also dropped,
Yea, the clouds dropped water.
The mountains flowed down at the presence of Jehovah,
Even yon Sinai at the presence of Jehovah, the God of Israel*
(Judg. v.).

So in the blessing of Moses we read :

*Jehovah came from Sinai,
And rose up from Seir unto them* (Deut. xxxiii. 1).

Ps. lxxviii. and the psalm of Habakkuk have the same image.

And in the more restrained, but still highly poetical, narrative of Exodus, we see that we have arrived at a marked religious epoch.

And Moses went up unto God, and God called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagle's wings, and brought

you unto Myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all peoples : for all the earth is Mine : and ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.

Appearances of God.—The Bible is full of theophanies, that is, appearances of God to judge or deliver. He is not really seen. It would have been death to look upon Him. But His presence is felt in awful and solemn moments, marked by flame and tumult, the lightning flash, and the thunder-peal ; though it is not in these that the Lord is, but, as to Elijah, in the still small voice of conscience, as to Moses, in the communication of the highest moral and spiritual truth. But it is naturally on the awe-inspiring sights and sounds that recollection dwells ; and poetry, and tradition, that is half poetry, always enhance the mystery and the terror. Through what has come down to us we dimly see how Israel on that memorable day drew very near to God, and yet shrank appalled from the thought of meeting Him : how they saw not Jehovah, but yet were to believe that He was there. A three days' ceremonial purification prepared them for something very solemn. Bounds were set to prevent too near approach to the awful mount, and the strictest charge was given against transgression of the limits.

And it came to pass on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and a voice of a trumpet exceeding loud ; and all the people that were in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet God ; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. And Mount Sinai was altogether on smoke, because Jehovah descended upon it in fire : and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered Him by a voice.

The Ten Commandments.—This account by one narrator is immediately followed by another from a different hand, describing more briefly the manner taken to prevent a too close approach of the people ; and then comes the well-known twentieth chapter, containing the Decalogue, or Ten Words, which, though given originally only to Israel, have proved to be suitable to every nation, and will be, as in all past ages, during all succeeding ages the "Commandments of God."

XXXII. THE GOLDEN CALF

Ex. xx. 18-23, xxiv.-xxxii.

The Man who went the cloud within
 Is gone and vanished quite;
 "He cometh not" the people cries,
 "Nor bringeth God to sight":
 "Lo! these thy gods that safety give,
 Adore and keep the feast!"
 Deluded and deluding cries
 The Prophet's brother-priest:
 And Israel all bows down to fall
 Before the gilded beast.

For the sake of producing a solemn and vivid impression, History is compelled to represent as having taken place in a single thrilling moment what in reality occurred slowly, and was developed from point to point. This poetical presentment of the past is especially characteristic of the sacred narrative. Thus we carry away from the Book of Exodus the impression that not only the "Ten Words" were spoken in that awful moment of darkness and storm from Sinai, when *all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the voice of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking, and stood afar off*, but also that the series of laws contained in what is called "The Book of the Covenant or Alliance" (Ex. xx. 23-xxiii. 33) were at once, and all at once, communicated to the Lawgiver. So, too, we are apt to come away from the account of the Sinaitic revelation with the feeling that there, in the initial stage of her religion, Israel had acquired a knowledge of God and His character complete and final. But the incidents of the narrative show us it was not so. Even the one most prominent truth, so vitally necessary, that the Divine Being is invisible, nor can be presented under any form, in spite of the second commandment, was scarcely grasped even by Moses himself. Even he was not satisfied to draw near unto the thick darkness where God was and listen, but, as we shall find, asked to be shown the Divine Person. And Aaron and the people almost immediately contrived a visible representation of God.

The Covenant.—A great religious ceremony had inaugurated the Book of the Covenant: Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and

seventy elders had gone as near the presence of the Lord as was permitted, and worshipped afar off, till *Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD, and all the judgments; and all the people answered with one voice and said, All the words which the LORD hath spoken will we do.*

Then the Lawgiver *wrote all the words.* Learned men can still read writings as ancient, more ancient, in Egyptian hieroglyphics, and in the strange wedge-like characters on Assyrian bricks and cylinders. The latter was the official script of Canaan before the Exodus, as we know from the Tel-el-Amarna tablets, but whether the Bene-Israel ever used it we do not know. It is not till long afterwards that we first come upon specimens of the archaic Hebrew and Phœnician letters, which are the ancestors of our own alphabet.

Then he *rose early in the morning, and builded an altar under the mount, and twelve pillars, according unto the twelve tribes of Israel.* The pillar (Heb. *matsebah*) was later a forbidden thing (Lev. xxvi. 1), for it became connected with, or suggestive of, idolatry. Burnt-offerings were then consumed on the altar, and thank-offerings presented, by young men of the children of Israel, there being as yet no priests.

Then followed the formal ratification of the Covenant. *And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basons; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. And he took the book of the covenant [see above], and read in the audience of the people; and they said, All that the LORD hath spoken will we do and be obedient. And Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold, the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words.*

Among Arab tribes alliances are confirmed by sharing or interchanging blood. The blood that reddened the altar of God and the people made them one with Him in a close covenant or bond.

Then the selected few went up, and they saw the God of Israel, as in the Epistle to the Hebrews we read Moses saw God, *who is invisible* (Heb. xi. 27). They had a vision of glory, which, in its Oriental manner, the narrative tries to present under the figure of precious stones,—as the Seer of Patmos does the glory of the New Jerusalem,—and realised that they were in the presence of Him who from this time forth would be known as Israel's God.

Withdrawal of Moses.—Presently Moses is summoned to the mount to receive the Tables of granite, with the Commandments graven on them; and he *rose up, and Joshua his minister*, and leaving the camp under the charge of Aaron and Hur, he *was in the mount forty days and forty nights*.

Apostasy of the Israelites.—The master-mind withdrawn, their new religious lessons were speedily forgotten by a people brought up amid a host of deities, each of which had not one but many visible representatives, known by the shape of bull, or hawk, or serpent, or grotesque form compounded of different beasts. Nay, it may be that, anterior to these influences, the Hebrew tribe had preserved a recollection of an ancestral deity who had been recognised by his worshippers under the figure of a calf. Their kindred, the Ammonites, represented their god Moloch as of this shape. In any case, even under Sinai, they could not, for more than a brief moment, bear to think they were to serve an invisible God; and Moses had apparently gone for good.

And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we know not what has become of him.

Aaron yielded only too easily. It is painful to find that the first sacerdotal act recorded of him, who was to rank in the opinion of posterity as Israel's first high priest, was one so strongly tending to idolatry. *And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden rings which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me. They were quite ready with their offerings. And he received it at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, and made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt*, the very words which introduce the Decalogue.

An altar was built before this image, and its rites were formally inaugurated by a feast. Aaron spoke of it as Jehovah's feast; but his mind must have had misgivings when he saw the licentious orgies into which the people immediately plunged, in honour of their idol. *They sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.*

XXXIII. MOSES IN THE BREACH

EX. xxxii. 7-xxxiv.

More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of.

He said He would destroy them, had not Moses His chosen stood before Him in the breach, to turn away His wrath, lest He should destroy them.

In this verse from Psalm cvi. is gathered up the history of this horde of people whom Moses tried to train into a nation, from the moment he began his grand task to his death. Not once only, but over and over again, his prayers, his devotion, his unselfishness, his readiness, nay, eagerness, to die for the sake of those he wished to save, turned aside a threatened and deserved doom, and rescued nascent Israel from early destruction. It is this feature of the history of Moses and of this period that has stamped itself most deeply and indelibly upon the national literature, both historical and poetical.

Intercession of Moses.—For forty days and nights had Moses been withdrawn from view on the mount, that

Separate from the world, his breast
Might deeply take and strongly keep
The print of heaven,

when a Divine intimation told him of the trouble and sin brewing beneath, and only his earnest petition even then averted a destruction which would sweep away all Israel. The prayer takes the form which so often repeats itself. It recalls the promise made to the ancestors of the race, and at the same time dwells on the shame and dishonour that would come on the name of Jehovah Himself should the Egyptians, Israel's foes, see her deserted. The plea was heard. *Jehovah repented of the evil which He said He would do unto His people.*

Wrath of Moses.—Then, with the Tables of the Decalogue in his hand, and accompanied by Joshua, who joined him on his descent, the Lawgiver approached the camp.

Almost all travellers remark on the remarkable distance at which sounds can be heard among the heights of Sinai. The noise made by the idolatrous revellers soon reached the two. The soldier Joshua at once jumped to the conclusion that some enemy had attacked the camp, but Moses suspected other cause

for the singing and shouting. A few steps more and they could see the calf and the dancing. *And Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount.* The second of the Ten Words violated so soon! What use were graven laws for such a people? . . . The second, and perhaps others, for it would seem that all sense of decency had been cast off with their garments by the dancers.

Destruction of the Images and Punishment of the Idolaters.

—Then followed the first recorded instance of iconoclasm. To shatter an idol is to deal an effective blow at idolatry. Moses burnt the image,—which appears to have been of wood overlaid with gold,—reduced the metallic part to powder, and scattered the ashes on the stream from which the people drank. But his righteous indignation could not be satisfied with this, nor with the reproof which drew such a lame excuse from Aaron. There are moments when inexorable sternness is necessary. The most vital truth of religion, for which Moses was contending, was in jeopardy; and by the help of the tribe of Levi, which rallied to him at his cry, *Whoso is on the Lord's side, let him come unto me*, the great leader proceeded to punish the guilty people. It is true that the narrative leaves the impression that the slaughter of three thousand persons that took place was indiscriminate. But the obscurity of ver. 29 (see R.V. marg.) raises the suspicion that the principle on which the executions were conducted was lost in the tradition. We cannot suspect of a want of justice him who yearned so for the people's salvation that he was ready to make atonement for them with his own life, nay, with the loss of the Divine favour itself. *Blot me, I pray thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written. The Book of the righteous, or of the living, or of life*, is an image which occurs constantly both in the Old and the New Testament. It is a fine poetic conception that heaven, like earthly commonwealths, has its roll of fame, its register of noble citizens.

Moses' Intercourse with God.—In all that immediately follows we see how poetry struggles to convey the sense of close spiritual communion which a true soul can hold with the Divine: how unsatisfied is that soul, till it penetrate from the outward to the inward, from the emblem to the reality. The Angel of Jehovah was promised as a guide; a separate place, where the Divine presence might be expected, was found in the tent which Moses used *to take and pitch without the camp, and he*

called it The Tent of Meeting; the pillar of cloud descended and stood at the door of this Tent of Meeting; the people who sought Jehovah went out to it. When Moses went out to it, all the people rose up, and stood every man at his tent door, and looked after him until he was gone into the Tent. And then they knew Jehovah spoke to him as a man speaketh to his friend.

But these emblems were all too little. *And Moses said unto Jehovah, See, Thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people: and Thou hast not let me know whom Thou wilt send with me. Yet Thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in My sight. Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in Thy sight, show me now Thy ways, that I may know Thee, to the end that I may find grace in Thy sight: and consider that this nation is Thy people. And he said, My presence (or face, such is the striking Hebrew expression) shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.*

God's face is the recurring biblical image of His presence, His favour, His protection.

To see God's face: this became to Moses a deep desire.

And he said, Show me, I pray Thee, Thy glory. . . . And He said, Thou canst not see My face: for man shall not see Me and live. And the LORD said, Behold, there is a place by Me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock: and it shall come to pass, while My glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with My hand until I have passed by: and I will take away Mine hand, and thou shalt see My back: but My face shall not be seen.

It was only by language of this figurative kind that religion could gradually express the growing truth of the invisibility and spirituality of God. His glory passes by. We see its skirts; no more. But we recognise there the Divine glory, and obtain an indication of an advance in theological insight made at this time.

The Tables of the Law replaced.—Commanded to replace the broken tables of the law with new ones of the same pattern, and once more to ascend the mount, *Moses rose up early in the morning, and went up unto Mount Sinai, as Jehovah had commanded him, and took in his hand two tables of stone. And Jehovah descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of Jehovah. And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, Jehovah, Jehovah, a God, full of compassion and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy*

and truth ; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin : and that will by no means clear the guilty ; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the childrens' children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation.

This is not the final word of theology. It is far from a complete revelation. For long to come Jehovah, as we see Him through Israelite conception, will be a God of a tribe, not of the whole of mankind : a jealous God, favouring one race, dooming others, using means which to the Christian consciousness seem often strange and cruel ; but we are shown how it was given to Israel to bring forth, at first in germ, and later in full growth, the confession of two grand religious truths : (1) God is *invisible*. No image can express Him. (2) He is a God of *mercy, grace, goodness, and truth*, and the one requisite for those who would serve Him is effort at righteousness. The union of the qualities, so often disjoined in man, so little thought of in the gods of old, "justice and mercy," "truth and love," becomes henceforward the formula, many times repeated,—the substance of the creed of the Jewish Church.

No wonder that the narrative should go on to describe how the splendour of such truths should show itself in Moses' looks, so that when *Aaron and all the children of Israel saw him, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come nigh him*. Converse with God in the Tent of Meeting, or on the mount, made his face, as was Stephen's, *like the face of an angel* (Acts vi. 15) ; and if the glory passed away, as St. Paul implies (2 Cor. iii. 13), the people did not see it fade, for a veil usually covered his head, and was removed only when he sought God's presence, and when he repeated to the host the Divine commands.

XXXIV. THE MARCH

NUM. x. 11-xiv. ; DEUT. i. 6-46.

To Him which led His people through the wilderness,
 for His mercy endureth for ever.

The narrative, which has been interrupted by the body of laws and regulations that conclude Exodus and Leviticus, and fill the

early chapters of Numbers, is resumed in the 10th chapter of this last book, which gets its name from the census with which it opens. Nearly a year has elapsed since last the camp was struck. *And it came to pass in the second year, in the second month, on the twentieth day of the month, that the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle of the testimony. And the children of Israel set forward according to their journeys out of the wilderness of Sinai; and the cloud abode in the wilderness of Paran.*

The Hebrew Theocracy.—It had been a momentous year. Not only had the moral law been formed into a code and the covenant established, but the foundations at least had been laid both of civil and ecclesiastical polity. The Jewish historian, Josephus, invented the name Theocracy for the system of government set up by Moses. “Our lawgiver,” he says, “had no regard to monarchies, oligarchies, or republics, but ordained our government to be what, by a strained expression, may be called a theocracy.” This does not mean the rule of priests as opposed to that of kings. It means direct government by God Himself, who was henceforth regarded by the Hebrews as their King, their supreme Judge, the Captain of their armies, their Court of final appeal. He would have by and by representatives in various departments, but they would only be His officers. At present all forms, except the simplest forms which the freedom of desert life could furnish, were excluded. The assembly of all the tribes in the armed congregation, the chieftains or elders of the tribes as established by Jethro, were the constituent elements of the primitive Hebrew commonwealth.

No special Priestly Class at first.—And Jehovah was Head of the Church as well as the State, or rather Church and State were not only united, but were one. In idea there were not even special prophets to pronounce His word, nor special priests to perform religious functions. All the people were prophets and priests. When Joshua, in his youth, with his soldier’s ideas of proper subordination, entreated Moses to forbid the prophesying of Eldad and Medad, because they had not taken their place in the formal procession of the chosen Seventy to the sacred Tent, but had remained in the camp, Moses answered: *Art thou jealous for my sake? Would God that all the LORD’S people were prophets, that the LORD would put His spirit upon them.* And ere this the proclamation had been made:

Ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests and an holy nation (Ex. xix. 6).

Gradual Organisation of Public Worship.—But practical life, religious as well as civil, requires human agency and organisation. And all that complex system which was afterwards developed—a hierarchy of priests and Levites, details of place and dress, ceremony for worship, the array of feasts and sacrifices—was begun at Sinai. In fact, all arrangements of sacred times and things, even down to the minutest particulars, are referred to Jehovah Himself. The construction of the Tent, or, as in our version it is usually called, the *Tabernacle* of Meeting, of the ark and all vessels needful for an elaborate cult, the appointment of priests and other functionaries, the ordinances regulating sacrifices and public worship generally, are in the concluding part of Exodus, in Leviticus, and parts of Numbers and Deuteronomy, bound up with laws and precepts relating to social and political life; but in the complete form in which they appear they belong to a much later stage of the history, and will be given in the Appendix. Only what may be gathered to be the earliest usage need be told here.

The Ark of the Covenant.—Worshippers of an invisible deity need some emblem of His presence, some indication that He is near. The ark was the symbol of the presence of Jehovah. It is called variously *The ark of Jehovah*, *The ark of the Covenant*, and *The ark of the Testimony*. The last name has reference to the Tables of the Law, which were placed in it. It was a chest made of acacia wood, 3 feet 9 inches in length, by 2 feet 3 inches in width and depth. Without and within it was overlaid with the purest gold. A moulding of the same material ran along its upper edges, to receive a golden covering known as the Mercy Seat. Above this rose two cherubim, one from either end, with outstretched wings and bending towards the centre. They were probably human figures, but winged. It was above the ark, and between these figures, that Jehovah was believed to dwell, or rather to make His presence known, so that He is often spoken of as *dwelling between the cherubim*. On the march the ark was carried in front. *And it came to pass, when the ark set forward, that Moses said, Rise up, O LORD, and let Thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate Thee flee before Thee. And when it rested, he said, Return, O LORD, unto the ten thousands of the thousands of Israel.*

When not on the march the ark rested in the sacred Tent. This at first was the ordinary tent of Moses, and was pitched without the camp. But a more suitable and a highly ornamented structure afterwards took the place of the simple tent. Its description is minutely given twice over in Exodus, and the substance of this description will appear in the Appendix.

The Levitical Class.—In idea, as was said just now, all Israelites were priests; and sacerdotal functions were assumed, down to a period long after the settlement in Canaan, by kings and chiefs and heads of families. Moses had already employed youths, chosen out of the various tribes and families, to take part in slaughtering the animals for sacrifice. And it is clear that it is by an anachronism that the sacerdotal office is represented as at this early time confined to the family of Aaron, or even to the tribe of Levi. But that tribe had just given remarkable evidence of religious zeal; and from their conduct in the matter of the golden calf may perhaps be dated their selection for sacred ministrations, and it was only natural that Aaron and his sons should have special functions delegated, as it were, to them by this nation of priests. Chief among these functions was the duty of offering the morning and evening sacrifices and other services at the altar. But there were others of a less distinctly sacerdotal kind. *And the sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow with the trumpets; two silver trumpets specially made for the calling of the congregation and for the journey of the camps.* In war they were to blow an alarm. In peace they were to blow these silver trumpets as part of religious ceremony. *Also in the day of your gladness, and in your set feasts, and in the beginnings of your months, ye shall blow with the trumpets over your burnt-offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace-offerings; and they shall be to you for a memorial before your God: I am Jehovah your God.* To them also was committed the beautiful office of benediction.

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying,

On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel; ye shall say unto them,

Jehovah bless thee, and keep thee:

Jehovah make His face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee:

Jehovah lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace (Num. vi. 24).

The Wilderness of Paran.—A march of three days brought the host to the first camping-ground mentioned, the wilderness of Paran. It is a vague term apparently embracing the wide stretch of hilly limestone country, elsewhere known as *el-Tih*. To the north of this district lay what was afterwards known to Israel as the Negeb, or “dry country,” rendered *the south* in our Bibles.

Difficulties of the March.—Towards Kadesh, or Kadesh-Barnea, a place in a part of the Tih known as the wilderness of Zin, and which must have been somewhere about twenty miles to the south-west of the southern extremity of the Dead Sea, and where we presently find an exceedingly long halt made, Moses was evidently directing his course, but apparently without clear knowledge of the route to be followed, since the ark is described as going *before them three days' journey, to search out a resting-place for them*. He was feeling his way. It is true that he had the local knowledge of Hobab to help him; for he had overcome the sheik's reluctance to leave his own territory, and had persuaded him to be to Israel *instead of eyes*. And attempts have been made to identify each of the three evening camping-grounds, named, two of them, from incidents occurring there, Taberah, or “Burning,” Kibroth-hattaavah, “Graves of lust,” and Hazeroth. But all we can clearly see is that it was a painful march, disturbed by disaffection of various kinds; the people complaining of hardship, and regretting the *flesh and the fish they did eat in Egypt for nought; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick*; and even the brother and sister of the Lawgiver turning against him, from jealousy, his Ethiopian wife being made the pretext. But again and again God vindicates His servant, and punishes the disaffected—the people by sickness and death, Miriam by leprosy. And Moses is ever patient, ever brave, ever ready to intercede for those who so misunderstood and maligned him; and out of every trouble there emerges the truth of the reality of his close communion with God. Others might have dim perceptions of the Divine in a vision, or in a dream. *My servant Moses is not so: he is faithful in all Mine house: with him will I speak mouth to mouth, even manifestly, and not in dark speeches.*

XXXV. AT KADESH

NUM. xiii.-xx. 22.; DEUT. i. 19-46, ix. 23, xi. 6; JUDG. xi. 16, 17.

Our doubts are traitors,
And make us lose the good we oft might win,
By fearing to attempt.

The Oasis of Kadesh-Barnea.—*Kadesh* means “sacred,” and was the name of many places. The Arabic name for Jerusalem is El-Khods. There is an oasis about ninety miles south of Hebron, called 'Ain Kadis now, which in all probability was the spot chosen by Moses as a convenient resting-place before marching on Palestine itself. It is only separated from it by the tract of country called the Negeb (“the south”). It is a district suited for pasturage, and therefore for the stay of a nomadic people. A march would bring Israel to the uplands, called in Deuteronomy *the mountain of the Amorites*; and this reached, a strong foothold would have been gained in the Promised Land.

The Mission of the Spies.—Before, however, taking any decided step, either at the suggestion of the people themselves as in Deuteronomy, or as in Numbers at the express command of Jehovah, Moses determined to send a scouting or exploring party forwards, to get a knowledge of the passes and the strongholds to which they led. Unfortunately, the traditions on which the Hebrew historians depended show in this part of the narrative considerable variations. One takes the scouts through the whole length of Palestine, from the wilderness of Zin unto Rehob, to the entering in of Hamath, that is, as far as the plain of Coele-Syria. The other only brings them through the Negeb to Hebron, somewhere in the neighbourhood of which they found the vine growing so luxuriously that a valley was called Eschol, “cluster,” and they cut one bunch of grapes so huge that it required two men to carry it. Again, one account ignores the presence of Joshua among the spies, while the other joins him with Caleb, who so manfully stood out for the bold course of action.

Report of the Spies.—Both traditions agree in the general impression produced—on the one hand, of extreme fertility and attractiveness of the country; on the other, of great

difficulties to be encountered, especially on account of the huge stature of some of the inhabitants,—though it suited the cowards who dreaded a warlike advance to describe it in the same breath as a land *flowing with milk and honey*, and one that *eateth up its inhabitants*, possibly with allusion to the frequent occurrence of famine,—inhabitants of such huge stature that it appalled those who had seen them. *All the people that we saw in it are men of great stature. And there we saw the Nephilim, the sons of Anak, which come of the Nephilim; and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.*

Despair of the Israelites, and their Punishment.—Most gave Canaan up for lost, and spent the night bewailing their ruined hopes. In the morning they broke out into open rebellion. Some even proposed to elect a new captain and return to Egypt. In vain did Caleb and Joshua try to reassure the recreants, till they were themselves attacked and nearly stoned. A spirit of alarm and distrust had been created, and it looked as if nothing remained but the universal destruction of a faithless race, which was only averted by the intercession of Moses, who again pleaded that the Divine honour itself was at stake, and recalled the revelation made at Sinai. *And now, I pray Thee, let the power of the LORD be great, according as Thou hast spoken, saying, The LORD is slow to anger and plenteous in mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression.* The threatened pestilence only fell on the spies. But a doom of exclusion was pronounced against all but Caleb. Forty years of wilderness life were to pass before Canaan should be entered, a time that would see all the cowardly generation die out.

Defeat of Israel by the Amalekites.—A revulsion of feeling followed the announcement of this punishment. Men often become in a moment as rash as before they were faint-hearted, and Moses could not keep the host from a wild attempt to retrieve their character. The undertaking ended, as he predicted, in complete discomfiture. He foresaw a combined attack from all the neighbouring tribes. *Then the Amalekites came down, and the Canaanites which dwelt in that mountain, and smote them and beat them down, even unto Hormah*, an unknown place, originally called Zephath (Judg. i. 17). The name *Hormah* seems properly to mean “asylum”; but its resemblance to a word implying *devotion to destruction* led the historians to derive it

from that root, and to connect it with two different events, recorded the one Numbers xxi. 3, the other Judges i. 17.

How long after this event the Hebrews resumed their nomad existence, which they now led for thirty-eight years, the years of the wanderings, and whether the two or three incidents recorded of this time took place at Kadesh or elsewhere, we do not know.

Rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.—One of these was the most serious instance of disaffection. It was a deliberate attempt to overthrow the power of Moses and destroy the growing influence of the Aaronic family. It was a civil and religious revolution combined. The tribe of Reuben, under Dathan and Abiram, took the chief part in the movement, but they placed at their head Korah, a cousin of Moses, who demanded sacerdotal privileges for himself and his family, and his 250 supporters, drawn apparently from other tribes than his own of Levi.

The double nature of the revolt is shown both by the complaints of the disaffected and the nature of their punishment.

And Moses said unto Korah, Hear now, ye sons of Levi: seemeth it but a small thing unto you, that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to Himself; to do the service of the tabernacle of Jehovah, and to stand before the congregation to minister unto them; and that He hath brought thee near, and all thy brethren the sons of Levi with thee? and seek ye the priesthood also?

This party were directed to take censers, and put incense in them, and appear before Jehovah; and after the congregation had been bidden withdraw from them, they were consumed by a fire from Jehovah.

The fate of the political malcontents was different. The earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up. A plague followed, which was only stayed by Aaron rushing with his kindled censer between the living and the dead, and *making atonement for the people*.

Death of Miriam.—It was at Kadesh, we are told, that the death of Miriam occurred. The first of Hebrew prophetesses, precursor of Deborah, Huldah, and her who afterwards bore the same name, Mary, she had played probably a more important part than appears in the narrative. The prophet Micah (vi. 4) puts her on a level with Moses and Aaron.

The Waters of Strife.—At Kadesh, too, occurred the memorable incident which was the occasion of the exclusion of Moses from the Promised Land. That recurrent misfortune, a lack of water, again produced a spirit of disaffection. The supply granted at Rephidim was forgotten, and forgetfulness of the Divine Protector led to reproaches of His servant. Even the trust of Moses appears for a moment to have been shaken, and his usually calm spirit was ruffled. He was bidden to demand water from the crag that towered over the camp. *Speak ye unto the rock before their eyes.* It seems also implied that he must smite the rock with his rod. Indignation led him to preface his obedience with some words of rebuke to the people. *Hear now, ye rebels; shall we bring you forth water out of this rock?* He then struck the cliff twice, and the water came out abundantly. A psalmist, long afterwards, spoke of the incident thus:

*They angered him also at the waters of Meribah,
So that it went ill with Moses for their sakes:
Because they were rebellious against his spirit,
And he spake unadvisedly with his lips (Ps. cvi. 32).*

But the historian seems to indicate some other reason for the sentence that was pronounced on the brothers.

And Jehovah said unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed not in Me, to sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them. These are the waters of Meribah; because the children of Israel strove with Jehovah, and He was sanctified in them. No satisfactory explanation of these words has ever been found.

XXXVI. ONCE MORE ON THE MARCH

NUM. xx. 14-xxxiii; DEUT. ii., iii; JUDG. xi. 16-27.

Thou leddest Thy people like a flock,
By the hand of Moses and Aaron.

A Passage through Edom refused.—Moses apparently surrendered the hope of penetrating Palestine by way of the Negeb, and made overtures to Edom for a quiet passage through his territory. Kadesh is described as in the *uttermost of the border of Edom*. The negotiations failed, and even excited the

hostility of the king of Edom, who formed an army of observation to watch the movements of this advancing host; and this although not only did Israel disclaim any hostile intention, but guaranteed entire immunity to the districts that should be traversed. *Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through his border; wherefore Israel turned away from him. And they journeyed from Kadesh, the children of Israel, even the whole congregation, and came unto Mount Hor.*

Line of the March—Death of Aaron.—There is no doubt about the general direction of this march. Finding a direct entrance into Canaan impossible, and foiled in the attempt to gain a short passage round the southern end of the Dead Sea, Moses turned southwards, down the Arabah, in order to enter Moab by the circuitous route of Wady Ithm. But before they had proceeded out of the neighbourhood of Kadesh an event took place which must have saddened the great leader, the death of Aaron, the only surviving member of his family. This took place on the mountain, which must have been conspicuous and important, as it is called *Hor ha-hor*, that is, *Hor the Mount* (perhaps *the mountain of mountains*); but it is in vain to try to identify the peak. For two thousand years the grave of Israel's first priest has been pointed out on the summit of a height near Petra, the chief stronghold of Edom; but the testimony against a penetration into the Edomite territory is too strong for this tradition.

Eleazar appointed Priest.—The succession of the priesthood, that link of continuity between the past and present, now first introduced into the Jewish Church, and, amidst all changes of form, never entirely lost in the Christian Church, was continued in Aaron's son, Eleazar. The two elder sons, Nadab and Elihu, were dead. The singular usage by which this continuity was preserved in the later days of the Jewish hierarchy is reflected back by the priestly narrator to this first instance of succession. This was a transference of the official dress. *Moses stripped Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son; and Aaron died there on the top of the mount.*

Departure from Kadesh-Barnea.—At the end of the thirty days of public mourning the camp broke up; and having rounded the mountains of Edom, at the head of the gulf of Akabah,—not to be revisited by Israelites till Solomon made

Ezion-Geber his port,—they turned northwards up Wady Ithm towards Canaan.

Discontent of the Israelites—The Brazen Serpent.—But the way was difficult and trying, and the spirits of the people again fell. Water ran short, and the manna was found nauseous, and was named *light*, or miserable, *bread*. Once more bitter reproaches arose against God and Moses. But the region itself provided a terrible punishment for disloyalty and rebellion. Venomous serpents abounded in it, and spread terror and death, till a remedy was provided in the brazen serpent, raised upon a standard at the Divine command. This interesting relic of antiquity acquired a dangerous reverence, was regarded as an idol, and had to be destroyed by Hezekiah with every sign of contempt (2 Kings xviii. 4).

Passage of the Zered and the Arnon.—It was a marked epoch in the wanderings—almost an anticipation of the passage of the Jordan itself—when, after having crossed Zered, the “willow torrent,” that formed the boundary of the desert, Israel passed the first real river they had seen since leaving the Nile. This was the Arnon, which, flowing through its deep defile of sandstone rocks, parts the cultivated land of Moab from the wild mountains of Edom.

Two fragments of ancient song recall these two memorable fords:

*The valleys of Arnon,
And the slope of the valleys
That inclineth towards the dwelling of Ar,
And leaneth upon the border of Moab.*

The first line is probably corrupt, and certainly unintelligible, and has therefore been omitted.

“The Well of Heroes.”—The other fragment of song is a relic of the first encampment in what, after the desert, must have appeared cultivated land. They had come where a well could be sunk, and the charming little verse recalls all the excitement and joy of such an event:

*Spring up, O well; sing ye unto it
The well which the princes digged,
Which the nobles of the people delved,
With the sceptre and with their staves.*

Till long after, this well preserved its name, Beer-Elim, the Well of Heroes (Isa. xv. 8).

XXXVII. FIRST ATTEMPTS AT CONQUEST

NUM. xxi. 21-35, xxxii. 41, 42 ; DEUT. ii. 8-iii. 18, xxix. 7, 8 ;

JUDG. xi. 19-23.

To him which smote great kings : for His mercy endureth for ever ;
 And slew famous kings : for His mercy endureth for ever ;
 Sihon, king of the Amorites : for His mercy endureth for ever ;
 And Og, king of Bashan : for His mercy endureth for ever ;
 And gave their land for an heritage : for His mercy endureth for ever ;
 Even an heritage unto Israel his servant : for His mercy endureth for ever.

The Moabites.—Israel had touched the border of Moab at Ije-Abarim, that is, “heaps of Abarim,” doubtless the lower ridges thrown off from the mountains of Abarim, or “the mountains of the other side,” the lofty tableland which forms the eastern bank of the Dead Sea. Moab was a tribe of the Terachite group, closely allied to Israel by descent, tracing, with Ammon, their origin to Lot. As in the case of Edom, this relationship was recognised, and Divine directions were given not to *distress Moab* ; and from Jephthah’s message in Judges xi. we learn that permission had been asked for a quiet passage through the supposed friendly territory. This was, however, refused, and Israel skirted the land of Moab and reached the Arnon, the ravine of whose upper bed they appear to have named Nahaliel, “ravine of God.”

Sihon, King of the Amorites.—Here the situation was serious. They were on the frontier of three tribes, none of which was inclined to be friendly,—Moab and Ammon, and a powerful section of the Amorite inhabitants of Canaan, who had, how long before we know not, made their way across the Jordan, to form new settlements at the expense of the kindred tribes of Moab and Ammon. Sihon had formed a kingdom for himself out of the territory of the latter tribe, with its capital at Heshbon, a city that modern travellers still admire for its wide prospect and its cluster of stone pines. Thus Israel found right in their way a Canaanitish enemy, for Sihon refused free passage, and there was nothing to do but to attack him.

The Amorites’ War-Song.—It must have required considerable faith and courage. The savage war-song which commemorated the Amorites’ exploit was still chanted ages after. (See Jer. xlviii. 45, 46.)

Come ye to Heshbon. Let the city of Sihon be built and established ;

*For a fire is gone out of Heshbon,
And a flame from the city of Sihon ;
It hath devoured Ar of Moab,
The lords of the high places of Arnon.
Woe to thee, Moab !*

*Thou art undone, O people of Chemosh :
He hath given his sons as fugitives,
And his daughters into captivity,
Unto Sihon, king of the Amorites.*

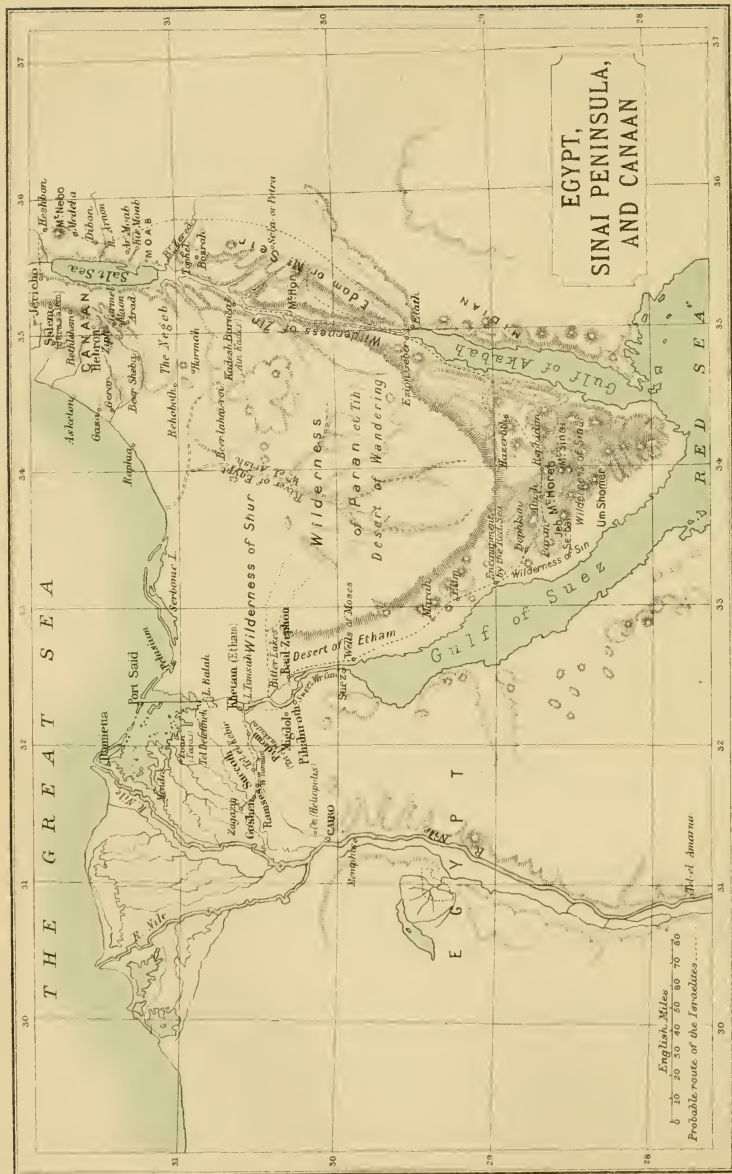
But an Israelite bard was soon to add a verse not less terrible, and enshrine in the Book of the Wars of Jehovah the memorial of a fresh conquest.

The Battle of Jahaz.—We know the name, but not the site, of the place where the decisive battle took place. It was Jahaz, a place mentioned, in the famous Mesha inscription on the Moabite Stone, as having been fortified by a king of Israel in his war with Moab. It was the first engagement in which these rival claimants for the possession of Palestine met. The slingers and archers of Israel, afterwards so famous, now first showed their skill. Sihon fell, the army fled,—so ran the later tradition preserved by Josephus,—and, devoured by thirst, like the Athenians in the Assinarus in the flight from Syracuse, were slaughtered in the bed of one of the mountain streams. And taking up in bitter irony the strain just quoted, Israel chanted it with a new and unexpected ending :

*We have shot at them : Heshbon is perished even unto Dibon,
And we have laid waste even unto Nophah,
Which reacheth unto Medeba.*

Dibon and Medeba both appear on Mesha's Stone. At the former place it was found, and from it Mesha himself derived his patronymic "The Dibonite." It lies not far north of the Arnon. Medeba is south of Heshbon. Nophah is uncertain.

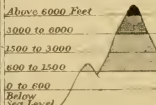
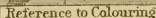
Og, King of Bashan.—Another Amorite kingdom had been formed farther north, Bashan, with Ashtaroth-Karnaim as capital, and extending from the Jabbok up to the base of Hermon. Its present monarch was Og, a personage enveloped in legends, some of them of a most grotesque character, as that he lived three thousand years, and had escaped the deluge by



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wading beside the ark. The Book of Deuteronomy has preserved one tradition of him, that he was a survival from the ancient aboriginal race of Rephaim (see R.V.), the Titans of Canaanitish story; and the writer mentions, as still existing in his day, a huge basaltic sarcophagus, for such the "iron bedstead" appears to have been,—like that of Eshmunazer, king of Tyre, in the Louvre,—which was kept as a trophy at Rabbah of the children of Ammon. The Ammonites not improbably joined in this expedition with the Israelite force commanded by two heroes of the tribe of Manasseh, Jair and Nobah.

Battles of Edrei and Kenath.—*So the Lord our God delivered into our hand Og also, the king of Bashan, and all his people; and we smote him until none was left to him remaining. And we took all his cities at that time; there was not a city which we took not from them; threescore cities, all the region of Argob, the kingdom of Og, in Bashan.*

What is thus simply told must have been no easy task, for Edrei, where the first battle appears to have been fought, and Ashtaroth-Karnaim, which may have been one of the towns included in *Kenath and the villages thereof* (comp. 1 Chron. ii. 23), might from their position have been thought impregnable. Yet Chedor-laomer (Gen. xiv. 5) had before Israel penetrated into Argob, the "stony," later "Trachonitis," which has been described as a great island of lava that had split, in cooling, into innumerable fissures, forming labyrinths most perilous to an attacking force. Rock-cities may still be visited here, with houses each of which is a fastness guarded by doors of stone. But into these the army of Israel swept, like a swarm of bees and hornets, a poetical description recurring several times in this connection, and understood by some as an allusion to an actual invasion by these insects, of such a terrible kind as to force the Amorites from their retreats, and so render their defeat more easy.

Settlement of Reuben and Gad.—The considerable tracts of country thus gained were eventually allotted to the part of Israel that had clung most fondly to pastoral habits. The kingdom of Sihon, between the Arnon and the Jabbok, consisting partly of smooth downs, called the Mishor, and partly of hill country, the southern half of Gilead, fell to the tribes of Reuben and Gad. It was admirably suited for nomad life. The northern part of Gilead, and all Bashan, famous for its oak

forests and its herds of wild cattle, *the bulls of Bashan*, to the half tribe of Manasseh, sometimes called Machirites, after Manasseh's eldest son.

Chronology.—It would be well if we could assign, within reasonable limits, a date to these operations. But whereas the system of chronology generally accepted, and shown at the top of many editions of the Bible, places them exactly in the middle of the fifteenth century B.C., another system brings them down a hundred years later, to 1350; and if the Egyptologists are to be followed, and Meneptah (or Merenptah) was the Pharaoh of the Exodus, we must advance still another hundred years, to about 1250 B.C.

XXXVIII. BALAAM

NUM. xxii.--xxiv., xxxi. 8; MIC. vi. 5-8.

O for a sculptor's hand,
That thou might'st take thy stand,
Thy wild hair floating on the eastern breeze,
Thy transc'd yet open gaze
Fix'd on the desert haze,
As one who deep in heaven some airy pageant sees.

In outline dim and vast,
Their fearful shadows cast
The giant forms of empire on their way
To ruin: one by one
They tower and they are gone,
Yet in the prophet's soul the dreams of avarice stay.

Alarm of the Moabites.—The king of Moab, Balak, might well feel alarmed at seeing his former conqueror suddenly removed, to make way for new-comers so irresistible. He saw himself and his territory at their mercy if the spirit of conquest, thus aroused and successful, should carry them back over the Arnon, now more definitely than before his northern boundary. He determined to have recourse to magic, since even the Bedawin Midianites, on whose aid he first relied, proved too weak to support him. The fame of a great Eastern mage had travelled from his home at Pethor beyond the Euphrates. In the Book of Job we read of men supposed to be endowed with a malign influence, which they exercised in the form of curses, so powerful that they could darken day by eclipse, and render

it unlucky (Job iii. 8). Such a one was Balaam ben Beor. To him Balak ben Zippor determined to have recourse, to save him from the powerful nation who (to use their own peculiarly pastoral image) *licked up all that were round about them, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field.*

The Message to Balaam.—"Twice across the whole length of the Assyrian desert the messengers, with the Oriental bribes of divination in their hands, are sent to conjure forth the mighty seer from his distant home. In the permission to go, when, once refused, he presses for a favourable answer, which at last comes, though leading him to ruin, we see the peculiar turn of teaching which characterises the purest of the ancient heathen oracles. It is the exact counterpart of the elevated rebuke of the Oracle at Cumae to Aristodicus, and of the Oracle at Delphi to Glaucus. Reluctantly at last he comes."¹ The dreadful apparition on the way, the desperate resistance of the terrified animal, the furious determination of the prophet to advance, the voice, real to him, even if the creation of a strong imagination and a troubled conscience, which breaks from the dumb creature that has saved his life, all heighten the expectation of the message which, against his own will, but under an overruling Divine influence which he would gladly have resisted, he has to deliver. The intended curse was to turn to a blessing on his lips.

Balaam's Prophecy.—Three successive times we see the sorcerer conducted with much state and ceremony to heights overlooking some part, or the whole, of the camp of Israel, then stretching along the Arboth, or "meadows" of Moab, now no longer Balak's domain. This was a plain situated on the banks of the Jordan, opposite Jericho, at the foot of Mount Nebo, otherwise known as Pisgah or Peor, different peaks of the same range of heights, and extending to Shittim, "place of Acacias." A bare cliff on the heights, Bamoth of Baal, and the field of the "watchers," Zophim, on Pisgah, see vast sacrifices prepared, and the king and his retinue standing by their burnt offerings, while the mage goes apart to seek for enchantments. But enchantments are vain against the God of Israel. When the substance of Balaam's prophecy was reduced to its poetical form and introduced into the Pentateuch we do not know; possibly in David's reign; but that the magnificent torrent of its verse does preserve the substance we need not doubt.

¹ Stanley, *Jewish Church*, Lect. VIII. vol. i. 191.

*From Aram hath Balak brought me,
The king of Moab from the mountains of the East :
Come, curse me Jacob,
And come, defy Israel.
How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed ?
And how shall I defy, whom Jehovah hath not defied ?
For from the top of the rocks I see him,
And from the hills I behold him :
Lo, it is a people that dwell alone,
And shall not be reckoned among the nations.
Who can count the dust of Jacob,
And number the fourth part of Israel ?
Let me die the death of the righteous,
And let my last end be like his !*

No wonder, after this, that Balak should say, *What hast thou done unto me ? I took thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast blessed them altogether.*

And so it was. Again and again the power of sacrifice—seven altars, and a bullock and a ram on each altar—and of Balaam's sorceries were tried, but Jehovah was not to be won over by such means. Each time that Balaam takes up his parable he becomes, in spite of himself, a prophet of the Lord.

*God is not a man, that He should lie ;
Neither the son of man, that He should repent :
Hath He said, and shall He not do it ?
Or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good ?
Behold, I have received commandment to bless :
And He hath blessed, and I cannot reverse it.*

No enchantment, he confesses, or divination could have power against a people so strong in the greatness of their God that they could be compared only to the wild ox for might and the lion for courage, *who shall not lie down until he eat of the prey, and drink the blood of the slain.* Beside himself with rage, Balak now bids the seer *neither curse them at all nor bless them at all.*

Still, from the top of Peor, looking toward Jeshimon, the dreary waste west of the Dead Sea, he will make one last attempt. But Balaam feels that magic must fail ; *and he went not, as the other times, to meet with enchantments, but set his face towards the wilderness.* And when he lifted up his eyes and saw Israel *dwelling according to their tribes,* the spirit of

God came upon him, and he burst into a magnificent eulogy and prediction—

*How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob,
And thy tabernacles, O Israel !
As valleys are they spread forth,
As gardens by the river side,
As lign aloes which Jehovah hath planted,
As cedar trees beside the waters.*

And again, under the same imagery, drawn from the wild animals of the country, the ox and the lion, he predicts the glorious fortunes of the chosen race.

Then Balak's fury could not be controlled, and he bade the prophet flee from the scene of his defeat. This Balaam is ready to do ; but first, overmastered by the Divine afflatus, he determines to *advertise* the king of Moab *what this people shall do to his people in the latter days*.

And then follows a vision of the distant future. "He saw, but not now ; he beheld, but not nigh,—as with the intuition of his Chaldean art, a Star, bright as those of the far Eastern sky, come out of Jacob ; and a sceptre, like the shepherd's staff that marked the ruler of the tribe, rise out of Israel ; and then, as he watched the course of the surrounding nations, he saw how, one by one, they would fall, as fall they did, before the conquering sceptre of David, before the steady advance of that Star which then, for the first time, rose out of Bethlehem. And as he gazed, the vision became wider and wider still. He saw a time when a new tempest would break over all those countries alike from the remote East—from Ashur, from his own native land of Assyria. *Ashur shall carry thee away captive.*"¹

So was foreshadowed what we shall see was fulfilled in the later history. So the irresistible force of the prophetic impulse overpowered the baser spirit of the individual man. "The spectacle of the host of Israel, even though seen only from its utmost skirts, is too much for him. The Divine message struggling within him is delivered in spite of his own sordid resistance. Many has been the Balaam whom the force of truth or goodness from without, or the force of genius or conscience from within, has compelled to bless the enemies whom he was hired to curse,

Like the seer of old,
Who stood on Zophim, heav'n-controll'd.

¹ Stanley, *Jewish Church*, Lect. VIII. vol. i. 195, 196.

And Balaam rose up and went and returned to his place. The sacred historian, as though touched with a feeling of the greatness of the prophet's mission, drops the veil over its dark close. Only by the incidental notice of a subsequent part of the narrative (Num. xxxi. 8, 16) are we told how Balaam endeavoured to effect, by the licentious rites of the Arab tribes, the ruin which he had been unable to work by his curses ; and how, in the war of vengeance which followed, he met his mournful end." And they slew the kings of Midian . . . *Balaam also, the son of Beor, they slew with the sword.*

XXXIX. THE FAREWELL OF MOSES

DEUT. xxxi.-xxxiv.

Life did never to one man allow
Time to discover worlds and conquer too.

The Writings of Moses.—While Jair and Nophah, and Eleazar and Phinehas, were achieving their conquests over Amorite and Midianite, and laying the foundation for Israelite supremacy on the east of Jordan, Moses appears to have been busy writing and legislating amid the acacia groves of Abel-Shittim, in the plains of Moab. A great number of enactments contained in Deuteronomy and the concluding chapters of Numbers are referred to this time ; and in one of the latter we read how Moses wrote the goings out of the Israelites according to their journeys, by the commandment of Jehovah. In what characters did he write? That is a question full of interest. The hieroglyphs, which he may have learnt in Egypt? Or that cuneiform script which, we now know from the Tel-el-Amarna tablets, was used in Palestine a century before the Exodus? These formed part of the Egyptian archives carried by Khu-en-Aten, a prince of the eighteenth dynasty, from Thebes to his new capital of Tel-el-Amarna, where they were discovered in 1887. Or had Moab and Israel, even at that early time, actual alphabetical letters, the ancestors of those on Mesha's pillar, and in Jewish and Phœnician inscriptions—ancestors, too, of our own and all European alphabets? We do not know. Nor can it any longer be maintained that,

in the laws and the songs attributed to him, we possess the writings of Moses as they came from his pen. To doubt that he did write much is almost to doubt his personality ; but what he left has passed under so many hands, and has been embedded in so much new material, that scholars now are satisfied if they can touch the spirit and purpose of the man whose greatness, even if traditional, is so assured.

And now his work was nearly over, and the time of his departure was at hand. To his closing days three pieces are attributed : a Song, a Blessing, and a Hymn, the latter what we know as Psalm xc., which has become the funeral hymn of Christendom. These poetic utterances are the *vox cynea* of the departing seer.

Moses' Song.—Whatever may be the date of the form of these compositions, they breathe the atmosphere of the period with which they are connected. "The name by which, in the song, the God of Israel is called, must, in the first instance, have been suggested by the desert wanderings—*The Rock*. Nine times the song repeats this most expressive figure, taken, it may be, from the granite crags of Sinai, and carried thence, through psalms and hymns of all nations, like one of the huge fragments which it represents, to regions as remote in aspect as in distance from its original birthplace. And if the Rock carries us back to the desert, the pastoral riches to which the song refers confine us to the eastern bank of the Jordan."¹

Butter of kine and milk of sheep,

With fat of lambs,

And rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats

With the fat of kidneys of wheat.

So appropriate is this to the Eastern downs and forests, that we may fairly see in them a stamp of that peculiar locality.

The War-cry of the Tribes.—The Blessing of the Tribes has also been called the War-cry of the tribes. It has a very martial tone. It begins, like Deborah's hymn, like Ps. lxxviii., with Jehovah's march of fire from the South.

Jehovah came from Sinai,

And rose from Seir unto them :

He shined forth from Mount Paran,

And He came from the ten thousands of holy ones :

At His right hand was a fiery law unto them.

¹ Stanley, *Jewish Church*, Lect. VIII. vol. i. 198.

Then with distinctive traits, as in Jacob's Blessing, the prowess and the fortune of each tribe, with the exception of Simeon, is sketched; Joseph, to whom the greatest prominence is given, being mentioned instead of Ephraim and Manasseh. A magnificent burst of song, descriptive of the safety and prosperity of Jeshurun (Israel), when loyal to its faith and trust, concludes the blessing.

And now the end was come. The sacred narrative dwells on the feeling that even yet years of triumph might have remained for the aged seer, for *his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated*. Might he not lead the people still, and take them into Canaan? No. It was not to be.

Moses on Mount Nebo.—*And Jehovah spake unto Moses that self-same day, saying, Get thee up into this mountain of Abarim, unto Mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, that is over against Jericho; and behold the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel for a possession: and die on the mount whither thou goest up, and be gathered unto thy people. . . . For thou shalt see the land before thee; but thou shalt not go thither into the land which I give the children of Israel.*

And he obeyed, and now stood on Nebo. "He lifted up his eyes westward and northward, and southward and eastward. Beneath him lay the tents of Israel, ready for the march, and over against them, distinctly visible in its grove of palm trees, the stately Jericho, key of the Land of Promise." Modern travellers have described the prospect, and confirmed the idea given of its extent. It ranges from the heights of Edom in the south to Hermon and Lebanon in the north, from the Arabian desert on the east to the hill country of Judea, which shut out the view of the Mediterranean on the west, while from Hebron the eye travels successively over every spot renowned in sacred story,—Gerizim, Tabor, Gilboa, Carmel, and between them stretches of green, showing where the rich valleys of Shechem and Esdraelon open out.

Death of Moses.—All this Moses saw. He saw it *with his eyes, but he was not to go over thither*. And from that height he came down no more. Jewish, Mussulman, and Christian traditions crowd in to fill up the blank. "As he was embracing Eleazar and Joshua, a cloud suddenly stood over him, and he vanished in a deep valley." So a tradition preserved by Josephus. Other and wilder stories told of the Divine kiss

which drew forth his expiring spirit, or of the *ascension of Moses* amidst the contention over his body of good and evil spirits. The Mussulmans show his tomb on the western side of the Jordan. But the silence of the sacred narrative refuses to be broken. *So Moses the servant of Jehovah died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of Jehovah. And He buried him in a valley in the land of Moab over against Beth-Peor : but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.*

Moses as a Leader.—The month of mourning of Israel was a fitting tribute for the man who had found them a horde of slaves and made them into a nation. His patience and hopefulness with them had been wonderful. He had borne them as *a nursing father carrieth the sucking child* (Num. xi. 12). His gentleness and self-oblivion had won for him supreme authority and reverence. He could boast that he had spoiled and injured no man. *I have not taken one ass from them, neither have I hurt one of them* (Num. xvi. 15). His utter freedom from all littleness of soul had been shown by the wish that all Israelites were prophets like himself (Num. xi. 29). In all respects, indeed, he had proved himself a most capable leader, and great among men, immeasurably above all his contemporaries ; and remembrance that such a one had stood at the cradle of their infant nation gave all its following generations a grand impulse to a noble life.

Moses the Founder of a Religion.—But not as a leader or founder of a nation must Moses be chiefly regarded, but as the founder of a religion. It was by his religion, by the conception of the being and character of God, which he impressed on the people, or tried to impress, that he won for them, and for the world, the road to freedom, human dignity, and pure humanity. The Jehovah, indeed, of the Mosaic and long subsequent times is far from perfect, to the view of Christian knowledge. He is yet far from the Father revealed by Jesus. But He is just, He is merciful, He is faithful and true, and He is spiritual and invisible. How did this new and lofty knowledge of God find its way into the soul of Moses ? It came neither from his age nor from himself. It was an immediate revelation of God in his heart.¹

¹ Kittel, *History of the Hebrews*, bk. i. ch. ii.

XL. JOSHUA

Ex. xvii. 9-16, xxxii. 17, 18 ; NUM. xiii. 16, xiv. 6, 30, xxvii. 15-23, xxxiv. 17 ; DEUT. i. 38, xxxi. 14-24 ; THE BOOK OF JOSHUA.

The voice that from the thunder came
 To tell how Moses died unseen,
 And waken Joshua's spear of flame
 To victory on the mountains green ;
 Its trumpet tones are sounding still,
 When kings or parents pass away :
 They greet us with a cheering thrill
 Of power or comfort in decay.

The self-abnegation of Moses, the trait most strongly impressed on all his actions from first to last, received its crowning expression in the view granted him from Pisgah of the land he was not to enter. To labour and not see the end of his labours ; to sow and not to reap : to be removed from this earthly scene before his work has been appreciated, and when it will be carried on not by himself, but by others ; this seems the lot of man, a law of human history. "Again and again the Moses of the Church or the Commonwealth dies in the land of Moab, and goes not over to possess the good land ; and Canaan is won not by the first and greatest of the nation, but by his subordinate minister and successor, Joshua the son of Nun."¹

Character of Joshua.—But the continuity of the nation and its high purpose was not broken. *As I was with Moses, so will I be with thee. I will not fail thee nor forsake thee.* The difference, indeed, was marked as strongly as possible. Joshua was the soldier. He was not a teacher nor a prophet. "He was a simple, straightforward, undaunted soldier." His first appearance is in battle. He is always known by his spear or javelin, carried in his hand or slung at his back. The one quality again and again remarked in him is courage. The Divine revelation was made to him, not in a burning bush, nor by a still small voice, but in the words *as Captain of the host of the Lord am I now come.* His very name is martial. *Hoshea, help, or salvation*, changed to *Joshua* (Yoshua), or, as pronounced later, *Jeshua* (Yeshua), *Jehovah's salvation*, to be borne in fulness of time by Him who should save men from sin.

¹ Stanley, *Jewish Church*, Lect. VIII. vol. i. 204, 228, 229.

Preparations for the Passage of Jordan.—The first stage of Joshua's conquest was necessarily the occupation of the vast trench, the Jordan valley, which still separated Israel from the Promised Land. *To pass over Jordan, to go in to possess the land*, was a crisis in their history, of not less moment than the passage of the Red Sea.

And here Joshua shows himself at once, not only as the brave soldier, but as the skilful commander. He looks to the commissariat. *Pass through the midst of the camp, and command the people, saying, Prepare you victuals.* Next he took measures to ensure the fulfilment of the promise made to Moses by the tribes of Reuben and Gad, and half Manasseh, who had elected to remain east of the Jordan—the promise that they would take a foremost part in the difficulties and dangers of the war for possession of Canaan. *Ye shall pass over before your brethren armed, all the mighty men of valour, and shall help them. . . . And they answered Joshua, saying, All that thou commandest us we will do, and whithersoever thou sendest us we will go.*

Jericho.—Another point a good general could not overlook. Jericho, the one important town in the Jordan valley, lay right in front. It would be madness to cross the river without certain knowledge of its strength and means of defence. It was the key of Western Palestine, standing as it did at the entrance of two main passes into the central mountains. Later invaders of Judæa—Bacchides, Pompey, Vespasian—made themselves masters of Jericho before attacking Jerusalem, though she did not, as in Joshua's case, lie directly in their line of march. Her importance indeed lay, as Israel soon found, not in her strength so much as in her capacity to supply food. At present the traveller sees but a few hovels and a tower on the edge of a swamp, er-Riha, modern Jericho; but in the locality, somewhat to the north-west, at the foot of the hill Karantel, imagination sees rise a stately city in the midst of a wonderful fertility of grove and garden (Deut. xxxiv. 3; Josephus, *Wars*, i. 6. 6, iv. 8. 3). The "city of palms," "a Divine region," "fattest of Judæa," so at different periods was Jericho called. "Fragrant place" seems to be the meaning of her name. Her fame no doubt had reached Joshua, and he sent from Abel-Shittim two spies, who swam the flooded river and gained entrance into the town. They brought back word

that the inhabitants were already in a state of panic at the approach of Israel, after an adventure out of which grew the one gentle incident of this part of the history—the kindness of Rahab, and the good faith kept with her.

The Story of Rahab.—The house of Rahab being on the town wall, offered a convenient shelter to the two young men, whose arrival in Jericho had not been unobserved. The king sent to demand their surrender. But their hostess, hiding them under a heap of flax-stalks spread on the flat roof of her house to dry, declared they had already left her, and advised instant pursuit. Thrown thus off the scent, the officers made for the fords of Jordan to intercept the fugitives, but took care to have the gate secured behind them. In the evening Rahab went on the roof and communicated her plan of escape to her guests. She first told them of the terror inspired in Jericho by the news of the advent of the Israelites. *I know that Jehovah hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you.* She then exacted an oath that, in return for her kindness to these two sons of Israel, she and all her father's house should be saved alive at the capture of the city. They gave the oath, and she *then let them down by a cord through the window*, and gave them directions how to avoid the officers who were on the watch for them. Standing under her window, they arranged a signal by which her house might be known. From the same window a scarlet thread was to be hung, and all present in the house so distinguished should be harmless. If in the street and involved in the massacre, the victims would have brought their fate on themselves. They also pledged her to secrecy. *If thou utter this our business, then we will be guiltless of thine oath which thou hast made us swear. . . . And they departed : and she bound the scarlet line in the window.* For three days they hid in the hills, evading their pursuers, and, when the search was over, returned to the camp with their welcome news.

The Passage of the Jordan.—And now all was prepared for the decisive step of the passage of the Jordan. The narratives, for two or more are intertwined, dwell on the fact that the river, as usual in the spring, was in flood, and so heighten the effect of the miracle that ensued. Long afterwards, Hebrew poets loved to sing how *Jordan was driven back*. The prose account tells that *the waters which came down from above stood, and rose up in*

one great heap, a great way off,—thirty miles,—at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan: and those that went down toward the sea of the Arabah, even the Salt Sea, were wholly cut off: and the people passed over right against Jericho. The blending of two traditions has a little confused the picture of the crossing. But some details come out clear. The mass of the host, guarding the women and children, were halted about a mile from the water's edge. After due religious ceremonies the ark, borne by the priests and attended by the Levites, together with twelve picked men, one from each tribe, advanced. Their feet touched the stream, and at once the river bed was laid bare in the manner just described. In the middle of the bed the sacred procession halts, and the host is ordered to cross, keeping the ark to the north of them, or on their right hand. When the last man is over, each of the twelve picked men takes a stone from the bed of the river, where the priests had stood, and, following the ark, they carry them to the western shore, to form there a memorial of the great event. *And those twelve stones which they took out of Jordan, did Joshua set up in Gilgal. And he spake unto the children of Israel, saying, When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean these stones? then ye shall let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land.*

Gilgal.—Gilgal is connected by a play of words with the resumption of the rite of circumcision, that had fallen into abeyance in the nomadic life lately led; but while it means *rolling*, it also means a heap of stones or earth, which is much more probably its origin, as more than one place of the name existed. It received additional sanctity from the celebration of the Passover, when unleavened cakes and parched corn took the place of the manna, now discontinued. It became in a later age the seat of idolatry. At present, owing no doubt to the advantage of its position for commissariat purposes, it was made the standing camp of Israel.

XLI. THE CONQUEST

JOSH. vi.—xvi. ; JUDG. i.

Now Israel, hold your own—the land before ye
Is open ; win your way, and take your rest.

The Siege of Jericho.—With all her resources, Jericho is a city that has always been easily taken. Bacchides, Aristobulus, Pompey, Herod—all found her an easy prey. The sacred narrative describes how her walls fell down at the sound of Joshua's trumpets. Six days in succession the host encompassed the city, preceded by seven priests, blowing trumpets of ram's horn, and attended by the ark, while the inhabitants, already beside themselves with fear, trembled at every sound. *And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they rose early at the dawning of the day, and compassed the city after the same manner seven times : only on that day they compassed the city seven times. And it came to pass at the seventh time, when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua said unto the people, Shout ; for the LORD hath given you the city. . . . So the people shouted, and the priests blew with the trumpets : and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpets that the people shouted with a great shout, and the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city.*

Kerem.—The city and all that it contained, living creatures and inanimate objects, with the one exception of Rahab and her family and of the silver and gold and vessels of brass and iron destined for the treasury of Jehovah, had been formally devoted to destruction. It had been pronounced *kerem*, i.e. devoted, and therefore to be either destroyed or set apart to sacred uses. This terrible word is of sadly frequent use in this part of the history. It was a very imperfect conception of the Divine nature which made it possible. We can only shudder at the necessity that Hebrew religion should pass through this stage. Over and over again we find cities and races doomed to destruction, and it would have been considered insult and treachery to Jehovah not to have carried out the doom. Saul incurred the severest censure from Samuel for trying to save Agag, the Amalekite chief.

The Doom of Achan.—With Achan we have less sympathy,

since his violation of the command was due to desire of gain and appropriation to his own use of what was to be public property. *When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish mantle, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels' weight, then I coveted them, and took them.* But what an awful reflection is cast on the moral ideas, as well as the theological conceptions of the age, when his crime was thought to involve not only himself, but, with himself, *his sons and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had.*

This cruel practice of devoting enemies to entire destruction, as a thing well pleasing to their gods, was common in the religion of all ancient races. We find instances of it among Greeks and Romans. It appears in the inscriptions on which Assyrian monarchs record their achievements. Mesha, too, king of Moab and contemporary of Ahab, says on his pillar: "And Chemosh said to me, Go, take Nebo from Israel. And I went in the night; and I fought against it from the break of dawn till noon. And I took it; and slew in all seven thousand men, and boys and women and slaves, for I had devoted them (the same word, *kerem*) to Ashtar-Chemosh."

Treatment of the Canaanites.—And how should Israel have leapt at one bound beyond ideas that belonged to the age? And, strange as it may seem, the very fact that the conception of the Divine nature among the Hebrews was even in that age far in advance of those of neighbouring peoples, only seems to us, looking back, to have rendered these relentless slaughters more necessary. For Canaan reeked with the most abominable idolatries, and all its society was steeped in the vices attaching to licentious religions. So that, even from our standard, it seems that nothing could keep Israel to be the world's true religious guide but the wholesale extermination of the races opposed to them.

The teaching of Christ has absolutely changed the moral conceptions of the world. But neither the Israelites nor any other ancient nations, at this early stage of their moral development, had any conception corresponding to those which would in our minds rightly excite horror, were we to receive a command like that ascribed to Moses (Deut. xx. 16). Tragedies that appal us did not look unnatural to an ancient Jew: they rather appealed to a rough sense of justice which existed, where the

longing for retribution upon crime was not checked by a sense of human and individual right.

And now the belief that disobedience to the Divine command brought failure and loss has helped to stamp on man a reverence for Divine power. We shall presently see how Achan's sin paralysed the will and reason of the people, and led to a serious, nay, a very dangerous, reverse. At present it is necessary to ask something about the condition of this land which Joshua, fresh from his meeting with the Captain of Jehovah's host, was burning to overcome.

The Canaanite Tribes.—It was no savage or unpeopled region awaiting only occupation. It was a wealthy land thickly inhabited by a people, apparently of a common stock though broken up into numerous clans, known by different names, CANAANITES (possibly Lowlanders), AMORITES (Highlanders), HITTITES, HIVITES, PERIZZITES, GIRGASHITES, JEBUSITES, and never drawn into a common bond unless that bond were the power of an Egyptian Pharaoh, like Thothmes III., or an Assyrian conqueror.

State of the Country.¹—The adventures of an Egyptian officer sent into Syria to collect the tribute, about the era of the Exodus, have been preserved on a papyrus. It contains some curious information, and gives a vivid impression of the dangers of travel, especially if the traveller be an official of a hated oppressor. Fords are more common than bridges; cypresses, oaks, and cedars, "reaching to heaven," abound; there are many lions, wolves, and hyenas. The roughness of the tracks almost shake the traveller to pieces. A thief enters the stable by night and steals his clothes; and his servant, instead of aiding his master, takes the opportunity of running off into the desert and joining a wandering tribe, with what spoil he could lay his own hands on. At another time some rogue cuts his reins in the night, and the horses run away; and even at Joppa, where the rich gardens cheer his spirits and invite him to linger, a robber steals his bow, dagger, and quiver. More than once he is obliged to pursue his journey on foot because his equipage has been damaged by rocks or rolling stones.

Canaanite Civilisation.—But there is a brighter side to the picture. We get the impression that Canaan had reached a high state of civilisation. We hear of gold vessels with handles, collars and other ornaments of lapis lazuli, dishes and

¹ Sayce, *The Higher Criticism and the Monuments*, p. 342.

vases of silver, of laden boats and galleys, of chariots and horses, of glass, and worked and dyed materials, besides innumerable other products of art and industry, as among the plunder sent to Rameses II. There was abundance of wealth and prosperity, and even evidence of culture, since at least in one case, Kirjath-sepher, a library gave its name to a city.

Had this country been united under one powerful head, the task of Israel would have been harder than it was. Joshua's advantage, apart from the enthusiasm created in his soldiers by their religious belief, lay in the fact that the land on which he marched was inhabited by so many independent tribes, and had no central authority.

XLII. THE CONQUEST—*continued*

They gat not the land in possession by their own sword,
 Neither did their own arm save them :
 But Thy right hand, and Thine arm, and the light of Thy
 countenance,
 Because Thou hadst a favour unto them.

The Camp at Gilgal.—Gilgal, with its abundant water supply and other advantages for a camp, became the headquarters of the Israelite army for a considerable time. And apparently it was there that a rough preliminary allotment of Western Palestine to the different tribes was arranged. In its neighbourhood, passes to the southern, central, and northern districts converge ; and this fact alone must have caused anxious deliberation whether the advance should be made in separate detachments or with the whole force. The traditions preserved in Judges i. 10–15, 20, which are either repeated or confirmed by parallel traditions in the body of the Book of Joshua itself (Josh. xv. 13–19), refer not to a time subsequent to the death of the great captain, as the heading of the book at first leads us to think, but to the first movements of Israel after the taking of Jericho. The first ill-considered and ill-planned attack on Ai was apparently made before Judah had marched, with Simeon, on the expedition towards the south, since the repulse was found to be due to the sin of Achan, a member of that tribe. But the subsequent successes of Joshua in the centre and north of the country were gained by him at the head of what we know as

the northern tribes alone, while the subjugation of the hill country of Judæa, the Negeb, or south, and the Shephelah, or low country, in which were Gaza and Ekron and Ashkelon, was the work of Judah and his brother tribe of Simeon. For in the invasion the tribes acted singly, or as they were allied by older ties and common interest. Israelite supremacy in Canaan was not achieved by one irresistible wave of conquest, but only after an obstinate struggle lasting for generations. Gilgal appears to have remained the rallying place for the whole body, should any of the expeditions prove a failure; and there must have been a gathering of all the tribes there, previous to the march to Ebal and Gerizim, for the performance of the great religious ceremony ordered by Moses. But before that became possible the victories of Joshua must have taken place, and he must have become master of Central Palestine.

Attack on Ai.—It was with this purpose that he sent scouts to examine the practicability of taking Ai, a strong place on elevated ground overlooking the only practicable routes, the wadies Kelt and Harith, into Central Palestine. Over-confident from late success, the scouts declared the place easy to take, *and said unto him, Let not all the people go up; but let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai.* The result was a loss of thirty-six men and an ignominious flight.

Fall of Ai.—After the punishment of Achan, to whose sin this disaster was attributed, Joshua by a clever stratagem enticed the men of Ai once more from their stronghold, and then fell in full force on the town, took it, and reduced it to ruins, and so probably gave it the name ha-Ai, “the heap of ruins,” by which it was known.

Rahab's Adoption.—The passes were now secured, and Joshua might develop his plans. Two peaceful memorials remained of this stage of the conquest. The first was the reception of Rahab into the community. *She dwelt in the midst of Israel unto this day.* To her was traced back the princely lineage of David, and of a greater than David. Her trust in God and her friendly hospitality whilst yet a heathen were treasured up by the better spirits of the later Jewish and early Christian Church, as a signal instance of the universality of Divine mercy and of religious faith.

League with the Gibeonites.—The other was the league with the Gibeonites. About five miles north-west of Jerusalem,

on the principal of the three routes from that city to Jaffa, and at the head of the Beth-horon Pass, the traveller comes on an isolated hill, crowned with ruins, amid which is the small village of el-Jib, preserving the name and marking the site of the ancient Gibeon. Its inhabitants, with some reason, expected their city might be the next prey of this invading host. But the Israelites were ignorant of the place and its locality; and when they saw approach a submissive train of ambassadors, with worn garments and shoes, torn wineskins and mouldy bread, and heard them speak not of Ai and Jericho, but only of the victories over the Transjordanic kings, they easily credited their tale that they had come from afar, and readily received them into alliance. Indignation broke out when the ruse was discovered, and public opinion clamoured for vengeance. *All the congregation murmured against the princes.* But in the true spirit of believers in a faithful God Joshua kept faith. *And all the princes said unto all the congregation, We have sworn unto them by Jehovah, the God of Israel: now therefore we may not touch them. This will we do unto them: we will even let them live, lest wrath be upon us, because of the oath which we swore unto them.*

Their lives were spared, but tributary service was imposed on them, and this they willingly undertook. *And Joshua made them that day hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation, and for the altar of the LORD unto this day, in the place which he should choose.* With what fidelity Israel carried out its engagement the battle of Beth-horon will testify.

The Two Narratives of the Conquest.—There seems little reason to doubt that, up to this time the entire army at the disposal of Joshua had acted together under his command. And if we had only the Book of Joshua from which to draw our picture of the invasion of Canaan, we should gather that the united armies in two campaigns conquered all Palestine, from the Lebanon to the southern desert, and exterminated its population. Then, the land being formally partitioned among the tribes, they had only to enter and take possession of the territories allotted to them. But in Judges i.-ii. 5, as was pointed out above, we have quite a different picture. There we see the tribes invading the land singly, or as they are united by common interest. They fight for their own hand with varying success, or settle peaceably among the older population.

Separation of the Tribes of Judah and Joseph.—The larger cities, with few exceptions, the fertile valleys, and the seaboard plain remained in the hands of the Canaanites. For long the Israelites were really masters only in the mountains of Central and Southern Canaan; and the two strongest tribes, Joseph and Judah, were completely separated from each other by a line of Canaanite strongholds, of which Jebus, afterwards Jerusalem, was one, and the most important one. This separation, so defined and so long continued, left its mark indelibly on the history of the race. Already we have the division into two kingdoms prepared. And on the north the Great Plain, and the fortified cities along its southern margin, separated Joseph from the tribes which settled farther north. This, too, was not without its influence on the future inter-relations of the tribes. Every step of the history as it is taken will confirm the latter of the two representations. And the Book of Joshua itself, by the presence within that book of parallels to some verses of the fragment that begins the Book of Judges, parts of which agree verbally, helps this confirmation. The historian to whom that book is principally due had a religious purpose in view. He wrote to present a theocratic ideal; and instead of dwelling in detail on each of the tribal expeditions, he focused them all into two great efforts, which he represented as national in their character, and speedy and decisive in their results. The advantage of this plan is obvious. It shows us the Divine leading in a striking and impressive way, and fixes our attention at once on the issues of that providential guidance which was shaping a chosen nation for a chosen end.

Whether the success already gained was due to united action, or whether only the Josephite tribes are to be credited with them, is immaterial. They could not fail to lead to important consequences.

Alliance of the Five Kings—Siege of Gibeon.—The success of Israel at Ai, and, even more, the desertion of Gibeon, the position of which made it an important place, roused the chiefs of the Amorites to take immediate action. Scarcely had Joshua withdrawn to his camp at Gilgal when the "kings," as they are called—of Jebus; of Hebron, twenty miles south of it; of Jarmuth, sixteen miles south-west of it; of Lachish, fifteen miles nearly south of Jarmuth, on the east slopes of the hill country; and of Eglon, a town near Lachish: five in all—

banded together and proceeded to invest Gibeon. News was at once sent to Joshua, with an urgent summons to come with the help which those who had submitted had a right to claim.

XLIII. BATTLE OF BETH-HORON AND ITS RESULTS

JOSH. x. ; DEUT. xxvii.

Thou didst cleave the earth with rivers.
 The mountains saw thee and were afraid ;
 The tempest of waters passed by :
 The deep uttered his voice,
 And lifted up his hands on high.
 The sun and moon stood still in their habitation ;
 At the light of thine arrows as they went,
 At the shining of thy glittering spear.
 Thou didst march through the land in indignation,
 Thou didst thrash the nations in anger.

The Gibeonites appeal for Help.—The recreant city was besieged, and its allies were urgently called to raise the siege. *Slack not thy hands from thy servants ; come up to us quickly, and save us, and help us : for all the kings of the Amorites that dwell in the hill country are gathered together against us.* Not a moment was to be lost. As in the battle of Marathon, everything depended on the suddenness of the blow, which would break in pieces the hostile confederation, and religious zeal prompted an immediate attack. *And the LORD said unto Joshua, Fear them not : for I have delivered them unto thy hands ; there shall not a man of them stand before thee.* The distance of a three days' journey was covered in one forced march—a night march. Before sunrise the Israelite army had reached the open ground at the foot of the hill on which Gibeon stood.

Defeat of the Canaanites.—Besiegers and besieged were alike taken by surprise ; and before one fierce onset, which nothing could resist, the former turned and fled. From Gibeon to the upper of the two Beth-horons the route is very rough, ending in a long rocky ascent. This was now strewn with corpses. *There was a great slaughter.*

Fortune, the vanquished might hope, would be kinder when

the top of the pass was reached, and they could pour downwards to Lower Beth-horon. Two miles of rugged road separate the two towns ; but as they fled, now over ledges of bare rock, now down a stony stairway, a fearful hailstorm, as in the fight of Barak against Sisera, broke over the disordered ranks. *And it came to pass, as they fled from before Israel, while they were in the going down of Beth-horon, that Jehovah cast down great stones from heaven upon them unto Azekah, and they died : they were more which died with the hailstones than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword.*

Still, the chances were that the bulk of the army might escape into the more open country at the foot of the pass ; and Joshua, longing to make the defeat for ever decisive, feared that even the long Eastern summer day might be too short for his work. Already, before—perhaps centuries before—the historian wrote his account, the poetic genius of Israel had found the situation finely suggestive. In the Book of Jashar, or the Upright,—a collection, apparently, of songs of that mingled patriotism and religion so peculiar to Israel, from which we have another extract preserved in David's Lament over Saul,—imagination had treated the incident in its own beautiful way, as it did afterwards again in the Psalm of Habbakuk. The day had been praised as the most memorable of all days, when the very sun itself had seemed to wait and the moon to delay, in order to give time for the complete overthrow of the enemies of Israel, who were also the enemies of God and religion ; and with dramatic feeling Joshua had himself, as though they too formed part of the host under his command, issued his orders to the heavenly bodies.

He said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon ; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the nation had avenged themselves of their enemies. Is not this written in the book of Jashar ? The historian quoted and repeated the poetry, for to his ear such figures were common. He had heard it sung how the stars fought for Barak in their courses ; and how the hills had melted like wax at the presence of Jehovah. The Bible is full of such imagery. Habbakuk, while adopting the language of the Book of Jashar, sang how the deep not only uttered his voice,—that is an image we use every day—but also lifted up his hands.

In literal history the day did prove long enough for the

completion of victory. The fugitives could not rally. *The Lord smote them to Azekah and unto Makkedah.* These were places in the Shephelah, but have not been identified. The five kings thought to find escape in one of the many huge caves that are common in a limestone formation. *The cave at Makkedah, where they hid, seems to have been well known.* Joshua, when told, ordered it to be blocked by huge stones, and stationed a guard to watch it whilst the pursuit was continued. Indeed, a regular camp was formed; and thither at last all the people of Israel returned *in peace: none moved his tongue against any of the children of Israel.*

Slaying of the Five Kings.—And then the five kings were dragged out of the recesses of the cave to the gaze of their enemies. An awe is described as falling on the Israelite warriors when they saw them. At the conqueror's bidding they drew near, and, according to the usages portrayed in the monuments of Assyria and Egypt, placed their feet on the necks of their enemies. It was reserved for Joshua himself to slay them. The dead bodies were hung aloft, each on its own separate tree, until the evening, when at last that memorable sun went down. The cave where they had been hidden became the royal sepulchre.

Further Conquests.—Joshua was too good a soldier not to follow up a victory, and he no doubt made himself master of the northern part of the Shephelah. The narrative, in its summary manner, makes him capture successively Makkedah, Libnah, Lachish, Eglon, Hebron, and Debir. But four of these places are far to the south; and in the case of two of them, Hebron and Debir, we have other accounts, one of them in the Book of Joshua itself, which shows that their conquest was the work of separate expeditions by the southern tribes, Judah and Simeon and the Kenizzites.

But the decisive nature of the battle of Beth-horon cannot be doubted. *When Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, unto the camp to Gilgal,* the power of resistance in the Canaanites of the centre and south was practically broken, and the foundation was laid for a Hebrew empire. The only incident of this period expressly mentioned in the latter books of the Old Testament is this battle. *He shall be wroth, as in the valley by Gibeon* (Isa. xxviii. 21). The very day of the week was fixed in later traditions—Thursday by the Samaritans,

Friday by the Mussulmans. Well might historians say of it : *There was no day like that before it or after it.*

The March to Shechem.—This great success opened the way not only for the march of an army, but for a pilgrimage, as it may be called, of the whole people through Central Palestine, to carry out the Mosaic command of the performance of a great inaugural service, which was to mark the fact of taking possession of the land. The conquest, it is true, had not been effected. It was to take a long time, and not to be the work of the whole host under one leader, but was to be secured by the independent action of tribes, or groups of tribes. But it seems natural to refer the pilgrimage to Shechem to the moment when a great victory had so paralysed the Canaanites with fear that the passes leading from the Jordan valley into what was afterwards Samaria, would be left unmolested, and possibly before Judah and Simeon, on the one hand, and Joseph, with its closely allied tribes, on the other, started on their adventurous expeditions. The alternative is to place the occurrence still later—towards the end of Joshua's career.

The Reading of the Law on Ebal and Gerizim.—Shechem must have been from the first the object of Israel's most ardent hope. It was the natural centre of the Promised Land. It seemed marked out by every advantage to be the political and religious centre. It was associated with Abraham ; still more closely with Jacob. But each of these patriarchs had deserted it for other resting-places. And it was to be deserted now. For one day Ebal and Gerizim looked down on all Israel : men, women, and children, the elders and their officers and their judges, standing on this side the ark and on that side before the priests, the Levites, while the law was read, those stationed on Ebal answering with a loud Amen to its curses, those on Gerizim to its blessings (Deut. xxvii.). But the only permanent records left were the altars on which the sacrifices had been burnt, and the pillar on which Joshua inscribed the *law of Moses*. The ark found no home at Shechem.

The Ark at Shiloh.—Shiloh, a spot unmarked by any natural features of strength or beauty, or by any ancient recollections, but recommended by its comparative seclusion, and the fact that it was near, though not actually upon, the central thoroughfare of Palestine, was to receive it, and to become, in consequence, the rival of Jerusalem for the seat of national worship. It may indeed

have been deposited at this time. For we read that *the whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled themselves together at Shiloh, and set up the tent of meeting there* (Josh. xviii. 1). But the precise moment of this event we do not know.

XLIV. TRIBAL SUCCESSES

JOSH. xv. 13-20, 63, xvii. 11-18 ; JUDG. i., ii. 1-5.

On each hand slaughter and gigantic deeds.

That a provisional and ideal partition of the land to be conquered had been made, probably by Moses himself during his retirement at Abel-Shittim—ideal because hardly a single tribe really succeeded in getting entire possession of the territory thus assigned—is almost incontestable. And the history shows us that the method of conquest anticipated, and actually followed, was such as had secured possession of Gilead and the other Transjordanic districts to the clans which elected to remain in that region. The various tribes were expected to make expeditions alone, or in combination with those who were to be neighbours, some tribal hero leading them. In after times the historical retrospect, focusing, so to speak, all the details of conquest, represents concerted action of the whole people under the guidance of Joshua as lasting throughout the life of that great commander, and refers the occurrences narrated in the first chapter of the Book of Judges to a time subsequent to his death. And yet they are partly told in Joshua xv., and placed during his lifetime. There can be no question that the latter is the more correct. Joshua was the general of all Israel ; and, acting in concert under his leadership, they established a firm footing in the land, and after the formal taking possession by the religious ceremony at Shechem, and the return to the camp at Gilgal, it was possible for the several tribes to begin their individual conquests.

Capture of Bezek.—Then *the children of Israel asked of Jehovah, saying, Who shall go up for us first against the Canaanites, to fight against them ? And Jehovah said, Judah shall go up : behold, I have delivered the land* (that is, the

portion provisionally assigned to the great tribe) *into his hand. And Judah said unto Simeon his brother, Come up with me into my lot, that we may fight against the Canaanites; and I likewise will go with thee into thy lot. So Simeon went with him* (Judg. i. 1). *And Judah went up* (the expression implies a long march up one of the defiles leading from the neighbourhood of Jericho into the hill country of Judah); *and the Lord delivered the Canaanites and Perizzites* (that is, Lowlanders and Villagers) *into their hand: and they smote of them in Bezek ten thousand men.*

The locality of Bezek is unknown. The mutilation of its chief or lord—such is the meaning of *Adoni-Bezek*—made a great impression, because of the justice of its retribution on one who had practised so long the same barbarous custom.

Even-handed justice
Commends the ingredients of the poisoned chalice
To our own lips.

Capture of Jebus.—Bezek seems to have been in the neighbourhood of Jebus, here called by its later and more famous name Jerusalem, which was next attacked. *And the children of Judah fought against Jerusalem, and took it, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and set the city on fire.* Apparently the conquerors did not recognise the importance of the position, and abandoned it, to be again held by its old inhabitants, and made into a stronghold capable of defying David. Or it may be that the *citadel* did not fall into the hands of Judah, and that this is all that is implied in Joshua xv. 63. *And as for the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out: but the Jebusites dwelt with the children of Judah at Jerusalem, unto this day.*

Caleb and Othniel.—Caleb was the hero of this expedition. He apparently belonged to an Edomite family, the Kenizzites, which had been absorbed into the tribe of Judah. Found “faithful among the faithless” at the time of the exploration, he had been preserved during the desert wanderings; and though now eighty years old, was still as he had been in his prime. Claiming the fulfilment of a promise made him by Moses, he marched on Hebron, then Kirjath-Arba, that is, Arba’s city, and made it his own; while Othniel, variously

described as his nephew or his younger brother, inspired by the promise of the hand of Achsah, his niece, attacked and took Kirjath-Sepher (Book-town), afterwards known as Debir. The anecdote which tells how the bride tried to move Othniel to ask an increase of dowry with her, and when she could not overcome his modesty, instead of entering his tent, rode off to her father, and impetuously threw herself from her ass, to beg for a better watered land, and received the upper and nether springs, is as lifelike as it is Oriental.

Further Successes of Judah and Simeon.—The brother tribes now pushed on southwards into the Negeb, to secure Simeon's inheritance; and a settlement was also provided for the Kenites, a branch of the great Midianite clan, which had attached itself to the fortunes of the chosen people. And now vengeance was taken on Arad and the surrounding country for the rebuff administered to Israel on its first approach to Canaan; and a place named Zephath, which had possibly at that time been pronounced *Hormah*, or "Devoted," experienced the full meaning of that terrible word. The march then turned to the north-west, and Gaza, Ashkelon, and Ekron, three of the famous Philistine strongholds, fell, but only for a temporary occupation.

Josephite Conquests.—We have not such a detailed account of the conquests made by the Joseph tribes, but indications in abundance that a similar method was followed. For instance, we are told *of the house of Joseph, they also went up against Bethel*, and took it. Probably all these, afterwards known as northern tribes, acted at first in concert, and under the direct leadership of Joshua, who, even as an Ephraimite, would naturally be at their head. To gain the battle of Merom, he must have had a large force under him.

Canaanite Confederacy under Jabin.—For Jabin ("the Wise"), king of Hazor, rallied to him all that remained of Canaanite strength, for a last combined effort to shake off the invading foe. As the British chiefs were driven to the Land's End before the advance of the Saxon, so at this Land's End of Palestine—whatever the precise situation of Hazor it was in the extreme north of the country—were gathered for this last struggle not only the kings of the north, in the immediate neighbourhood, but the chiefs of every place of strength in the Jordan valley, in the maritime plain, in the central hills.

Even from Jebus, still smarting from the attack of Judah, a contingent was drawn. And when all these kings met, *they came and pitched together at the waters of Merom, to fight against Israel.*

War Chariots.—And now appear for the first time the horses and chariots that play so large a part in Canaanite warfare wherever, as now, the ground was suited for their manœuvres, calling forth from Joshua the command, *Thou shalt hough their horses, and burn their chariots with fire.*

Battle of Merom.—No details of the battle are given. Joshua appears to have taken the enemy by surprise, his usual stratagem. *The Lord delivered them into the hand of Israel; and they smote them, and chased them unto great Zidon, and unto Misrephoth-maim, and unto the valley of Mizpeh, eastward.*

It is probable that the narrative has focused in this complete victory the results of a long-protracted struggle, in which the various tribes act independently, or at all events in groups. And it is with their result, rather than with the details of the tribal adventures, that we are concerned. The conquest was effected. The original and provisional allotment of territory was revised at a solemn gathering at Shiloh, which, as soon as Ephraim had settled down in its new home, became the sanctuary. Judah, as we have seen, had secured its portion. Apparently Simeon found it necessary to appeal to the boundary commissioners, if we may so call them, for a definite arrangement of their frontier, although their joint expedition with Judah had been successful. The great house of Joseph were in possession, and the notice we have of their capture of Bethel shows them in the act of taking possession. We know, too, that they were dissatisfied with the extent of their territory, and were bidden by Joshua to conquer more for themselves.

The still unsettled Tribes.—But Benjamin, Zebulun, Issachar, Asher, Naphtali, and Dan had as yet failed to establish themselves. Nor did any of them succeed in dispossessing the districts assigned to them from the Canaanites. All they could do was to reduce them to the condition of tributaries, or agree to live side by side with them. The two populations, had in fact, but little difficulty in coming to some kind of understanding, speaking as they did the same language,

and having so much in common in social, and even religious, ideas. But here and there the antagonism was strong, and only became more decided with time. A great number of towns—Jerusalem, Gerar, Bethshean, and others—resisted successfully, and maintained entire independence. The iron chariots of the coast colonies proved too deadly for Israel to make much impression there. One tribe, that of Dan, failed altogether to secure a foothold. The Amorites forced them back into the mountains after every attempt, and rendered their position so uncomfortable that this tribe presently migrated to the north, leaving to Joseph the task of humbling its southern adversaries.

The Tribe of Levi.—To one tribe no district was assigned. Levi, already separated for offices of religion, was to receive its support from the whole community. It was to receive the tithes of the whole produce of the land, paying from this a tithe for the support of the priests. For their residence forty-eight towns were assigned, with a circle of pasture round each. Of these, six, three on each side Jordan, were to be cities of refuge.

XLV. THE SETTLEMENT

JOSH. xviii., xix. ; GEN. xlix. 1-28 ; DEUT. xxxiii.

And now their wondrous march was o'er,
And they had won their homes,
Where Abraham fed his flock of yore,
Among their fathers' tombs ;—
A land that drinks the rain of heaven at will,
Whose waters kiss the feet of many a vine-clad hill.

A long tract of time has to be covered yet before we see the Hebrews settled, in the true sense, with a central and permanent government. And even after the formal distribution of their territories to the several tribes, a long period elapsed before a peaceful enjoyment of the new inheritance was possible. How long it is difficult to estimate. But before Joshua died, twenty-five years after crossing the Jordan, he had the privilege of seeing some kind of government established ; and the ten decrees ascribed to him by tradition reflect, there can be little doubt, the stage to which order and civilisation had attained at his death, and, whatever their date, truly represent him as an

organiser as well as a conqueror. What is certain is that the Palestine of the Old Testament took now its permanent shape. Israel, it is true, was not yet a nation. It was an agglomeration of tribes which never lost sight of their common origin. And, among their relations, these tribes often included sections still nomad, with whom their ancestors had been on terms of friendship. We have seen this in the case of the Kenites and the Kenizzites, affiliated to Judah. Modern Turkey presents a similar spectacle.¹ Two populations exist side by side, inhabiting a kind of double village, hating and yet tolerating one another. So Israelites and Canaanites lived. The maps we draw of the Holy Land of the time are in one sense misleading, as they convey the idea of provinces or states. In reality there was only the tribe and its towns. Yet the Doomsday Book, as it has been called, of Joshua, was something more than an ideal. The territorial settlement was real, and the principle of perpetuity of property was introduced. In default of male heirs, daughters, as settled in the case of the daughters of Zelophehad, were to inherit, and keep the estate in the family.

The Case of Zelophehad.—He was of the tribe of Manasseh, and had five daughters, whose names are duly given, but no sons. *And they came near before Eleazar the priest, and before Joshua the son of Nun, and before the princes, saying, Jehovah commanded Moses to give us an inheritance among our brethren: therefore, according to the commandment of Jehovah, he gave them an inheritance among the brethren of their father. And there fell ten parts to Manasse . . . because the daughters of Manasseh had an inheritance.*

The Nomadic Tribes.—The country to which, after taking their share in the conquest of Western Palestine, the nomadic tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half Manasseh returned to tend their herds and flocks, has already been noticed.

The Territory of Judah.—Of the western settlements that of Judah, afterwards Judæa, is both historically and religiously most important. It gave to the whole people the name Jews, which is now more frequently used than either their ancestral designation of Hebrews or their sacred title of Israel. It became the seat of the one enduring dynasty, the site of their temple, the platform of all their chief prophets. It contains

¹ Renan, *History of the People of Israel*, bk. ii. ch. iv.

the places of our Lord's birth and death, with the scenes of His temptation, His more painful ministry, and His agony.

Character of the Country of Judæa.—Geographically, it occupies an unique position, and its natural features are peculiar rather than interesting. It is small. "Even when you extend the surface to the promised border at the sea, and include all of it that is desert, it does not amount to more than 2000 square miles," exactly the size of Northumberland and Devon. "The centre is a high and broken tableland, from two to three thousand feet above the sea." The prevailing impression it gives is one of stoniness—"torrent beds, paths that are no better, heaps and heaps of stones gathered from the fields, the fields as stony still, moors strewn with boulders, obtrusive scalps and ribs of hills."¹ This impression is increased by the ruins of ancient cultivation—cairns, terrace walls, and vineyard towers, melancholy witnesses of the blessing of Jacob on this tribe.

For, with a play on the name Judah, the tribe is thus commended in the patriarchal blessing:

Judah, thee shall thy brethren praise :

Thy hand shall be on the neck of thine enemies :

Thy father's sons shall bow down before thee.

Then came figures drawn from the natural features of the tribal inheritance, in which, for strength, Judah is compared to a lion's whelp fresh from his prey, while the material resources of his country—the wine from abundant vineyards and the milk from the many flocks and herds of that pastoral district—are powerfully described :

He hath washed his garments with wine,

And his vesture in the blood of grapes :

His eyes shall be red with wine,

And his teeth white with milk.

The blessing of Moses on this tribe is wanting in such allusions, but, on the other hand, it contains an interesting historical reference to the conquest of its territory :

Hear, Jehovah, the voice of Judah,

And bring him unto his people :

With his hands he contended for himself ;

And Thou shalt be an help against his adversaries.

The pastoral character of the country still asserts itself, for nowhere does the shepherd's life assume more importance—

¹ G. A. Smith, *Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, pp. 260, 307.

assume, we may say, more of grandeur—than among the hills whence David was taken to be king *while following the flock*, where David's descendant called himself the Good Shepherd.

Boundaries.—The boundaries of Judæa are well marked, and they are of the nature of bulwarks. To the east there is the awful deep of the lower Jordan valley, *Jeshimon*, or the Wilderness of Judæa, and the Dead Sea. On the south, Simeon was to have been his frontier, but that tribe, which obtains only a curse from Jacob, and is not mentioned at all in the blessing of Moses, became merged in Judah on the one side, in Edom on the other, and got no secure hold of the Negeb, from which sixty miles of savage highlands, inaccessible, roamed over by wild Ishmaelite tribes, stretch away towards the Arabian desert. After the time of Hezekiah all trace of him disappears. The Mediterranean was the ideal boundary on the west, but Judah never obtained possession of the maritime plain, and even the Shephelah was always debatable land. Her own mountain wall was Judah's real bulwark on this side.

Inclusion of Benjamin.—The last ten miles of the Judah plateau on the north, before it breaks into the valleys and mountains of Samaria, became the territory of Benjamin, which was thus included in what is now Judæa. The precipitous valley of Hinnom separated the two tribes whose fortunes were to be no less intimately united.

And the border went down to the uttermost part of the mountain that lieth before the valley of the son of Hinnom.

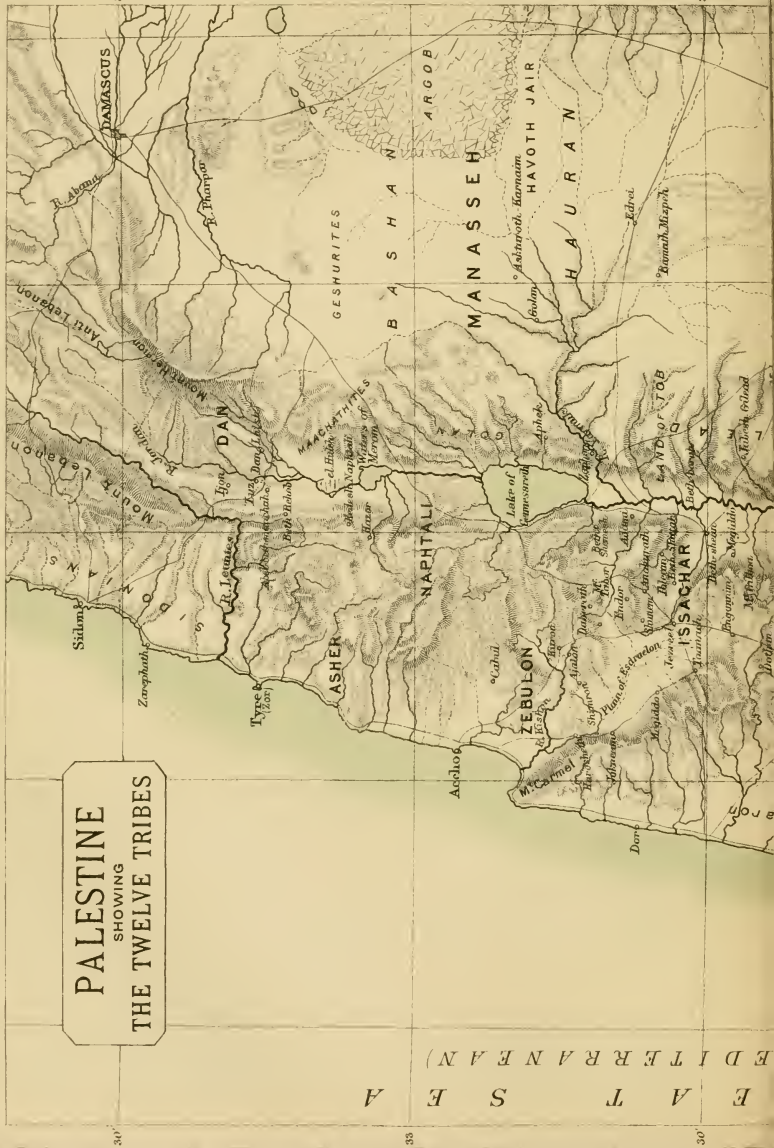
This little but warlike tribe, *a wolf that raveneth in the morning devouring the prey, and at night dividing the spoil*, to which Jerusalem itself geographically belonged, inherited a district described as a desolate and fatiguing extent of rocky platforms and ridges, of moorlands strewn with boulders, and fields with more stones than soil,—a country of fortresses, sieges, forays, battles, and massacres. The blessing in Deuteronomy xxxiii. 12 must certainly have a religious, not a historical, intention, and refer to Jerusalem alone and its position. *And of Benjamin he said, The beloved of Jehovah shall dwell in safety by him.*

He covereth him all the day long,

And he dwelleth between his shoulders.

The Josephite Tribes in Samaria.—The Josephite tribes, Ephraim and Manasseh, took possession of what is now Samaria. They naturally acted together; but, with the excep-

PALESTINE SHOWING THE TWELVE TRIBES



E A T S E A (N E A R T H A N N E A N)



tion of the surprise of Bethel, which became a frontier town to Ephraim, we are told nothing of the operations during which the important Shechem fell to the tribe. Possibly Joshua's victories had thoroughly cowed the inhabitants of this part of the country, which is easily open to attack, and where few invaders have been successfully resisted, so that the brother tribes encountered no opposition in taking possession of the territory assigned them. But they complained that their district was too small, and, when bidden conquer more, found formidable foes in the cities of Bethshean and Jezreel, able to pour into the plains their hundreds of iron war-chariots. The clearing of the forests, apparently of Carmel, the land of the Perizzites and of the Rephaim, must also have been a matter of difficulty and danger. We have an indication of the difficulty in carrying out the proposed assignment of territory in the statement: *And Manasseh had in Issachar and in Asher Beth-shean and her towns, and Ibleam and her towns, and the inhabitants of Dor and her towns, and the inhabitants of En-Dor and her towns, and the inhabitants of Taanach and her towns, and the inhabitants of Megiddo and her towns, even the three heights. Yet the children of Manasseh could not drive out the inhabitants of those cities; but the Canaanites would dwell in that land. And it came to pass, when the children of Israel were waxen strong, that they put the Canaanites to taskwork, and did not utterly drive them out.*

Blessing of Joseph.—To Joseph, the “fruitful bough,” both the patriarchal and the Mosaic blessings promise the richest and most fertile part of the Holy Land, *precious things of the fruits of the sun, precious things of the growth of the moons, chief things of the ancient mountains, precious things of the everlasting hills, precious things of the earth and the fulness thereof.* The fact answers to the poetry. Even in the higher part of the district, Mount Ephraim, as this section of the central range was early called, the traveller is surprised at the number of plains, meadows, and spacious vales; and when he reaches the vale of Shechem, he reaches a veritable garden.

Boundaries of the Tribal Territory.—Ephraim and Manasseh covered country about equal in extent to the counties of Norfolk and Suffolk. The boundary between them passed from the mouth of the Jabbok to that of the Kanah, which reaches the sea a little north of Joppa.

The Settlement of Issachar in Esdraelon.—In the patriarchal blessing on Issachar occurs what has been called the happiest sketch of a landscape and its history that was ever drawn in half a dozen lines :

*Issachar is a strong (or bony) ass,
Couching down (or stretching himself) between the sheepfolds :
And he saw a resting place that it was good,
And the land that it was pleasant.*

¹ “Such is Esdraelon,—mainly Issachar’s portion,—a land relaxed and sprawling up among the hills to north, south, and east, as you will see a loosened ass roll and stretch his limbs any day in the sunshine in a Syrian village yard. To one looking down into Esdraelon it offers room to stretch in and lie happy. But the figure of the ass goes further. The room must be paid for—

*And he bowed his shoulder to bear,
And became a servant under taskwork.”*

Open to east and west, Esdraelon was at distant intervals the war-path or battlefield of great empires ; more regularly the prey and pasture of the Arabs, who with each spring came upon it over Jordan. And when not the camp of a foreigner, Esdraelon has served as the estate of her neighbours. Manasseh, as we saw, claimed many of its towns by partial conquest. Ten years ago the peasants got rid of the Arabs of the desert, only to be bought out by Greek capitalists from Beyrout. The Mosaic blessing couples Issachar with Zebulun as sharing a commercial prosperity and having a common sanctuary :

*Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out,
And Issachar in thy tents.
They shall call the peoples unto the mountain (probably Tabor).
There shall they offer sacrifices of righteousness ;
For they shall suck of the abundance of the seas,
And the hidden treasures of the sand.*

Esdraelon in reality comprises three sections : the maritime plain of Acre, the central plain of Megiddo, and the valley of Jezreel descending to the Jordan. The hills of Samaria bound it on the south, the Galilean heights on the north.

The Settlement of Asher and Naphtali and Zebulun.—From exile times Esdraelon was counted part of Galilee, so that Zebulun became, geographically as well as historically, united with Issachar. The portions assigned to Asher and Naphtali

¹ G. A. Smith, *Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, p. 383.

also fall within Galilee, which extends northwards to the gorge of the Litany, and has Gennesareth as its eastern boundary. The narrow strip of Phœnician coast on the west, claimed for Zebulun and Asher, never belonged either to them or to Galilee : it was always Gentile. Yet the expression of Deborah's song, *Asher abode by his creeks*, points to a partial hold on the seashore.

The lot of Zebulun comprised what is known as Lower Galilee, the country between Esdraelon and a range of hills, nowhere above 1850 feet in height, running from the middle of the western shore of Gennesareth across to the Bay of Acre. Upper Galilee fell to Naphtali ; and since Asher could not secure its seaboard inheritance, had to make room also for that tribe.

Upper Galilee rises, in a series of plateaux, up to the spurs of Lebanon ; while from the north-east, over the gorge of the Jordan, the snowy head of Hermon looks down across them.

The vicinity of these high mountains meant an abundant water supply for the country allotted to these three northern tribes. And so much water means an exuberant fertility. Even now it is all under cultivation, and thronged with villages.

Out of Asher his bread shall be fat,

And he shall yield royal dainties.

Blessed be Asher . . .

And let him dip his foot in oil !

O Naphtali, satisfied with favour,

And full of the blessing of Jehovah.

This is no mere poetical figure. It is a land of luxury.

The olive, for instance, is so abundant that the country has a proverb : "It is easier to raise a legion of olives in Galilee than to bring up a child in Palestine."

It is a land of luxury. But it is luxury where luxury does not enervate. On these broad heights, open to the sunshine and the breeze, life is free and exhilarating.

Naphtali is a hind let loose, a figure which expresses the feelings bred by the health, the spaciousness, the high freedom, and glorious outlook of Upper Galilee. It follows that, from first to last, the Galileans were a chivalrous and a gallant race.

Zebulun was a people that jeoparded their lives unto the death, And Naphtali, upon the high places of the field (Judg. v. 18).

With the same desperate zeal, their sons attempted the forlorn hope of breaking the Roman power.

The Tribe of Dan.—It was a fitting neighbourhood for the

little but warlike tribe of Dan, which we shall presently find coming from the south to make at Laish a new home. In the preliminary partition of the country this tribe had been, we might almost conjecture, overlooked,—just as in the last catalogue of the tribes that appears in the sacred volume (Rev. vii. 4–8), it is dropped out altogether,—and then had been squeezed into a narrow strip between the mountains and the sea, as if it was the only spot that was left for it. The two parallel valleys, Ajalon and Sorek, comprised the Danites' minute territory, and the Song of Deborah seems to imply that they reached the coast. *Why did Dan abide in ships?* (Judg. v. 17). But it was a temporary military occupation, rather than a settlement. It is called the *Camp of Dan*; and the poetic figures applied to the tribe,—an adder, a lion's whelp,—though possibly referring more to the future settlements in the north, express the character and attitude of the little warlike people, *waiting*, according to their tribal war-cry, for an opportunity to dart or leap out and find deliverance in a more advantageous and less confined situation.

XLVI. DEATH OF JOSHUA, AND RESULTS OF THE CONQUEST

JOSH. xxii.–xxiv. ; JUDG. xvii.–xxi.

This is the happy warrior, this is he
Whom every man in arms should wish to be.

By actual conquest, or by friendly arrangement, the people of Israel had secured, if not undisputed dominion in Western Palestine, at least such a settlement that the historians can speak of it as a rest. For Joshua, at all events, wars were done, and he might devote himself, as tradition asserts he did, to making laws and regulations of a social kind.

Dismissal of the Transjordanic Tribes.—But there was one duty to perform, which may be called the last of his military acts. The Transjordanic army, consisting of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half Manasseh, had performed their part loyally. Of Gad the Mosaic benediction sings :

*He came with the heads of the people :
He executed the justice of Jehovah,
And His judgments with Israel.*

Well did they now deserve to be dismissed, to enjoy the rich pastures and woods of the territory chosen by them or allotted to them.

So Joshua *blessed them* and sent them away, and they went unto their tents.

They build an Altar.—But an incident attended their departure which nearly ended in war between the eastern and western tribes. Shiloh had already been invested with the character of a sanctuary. There the ark was deposited. And the ark was the one visible symbol of religion, now beginning to assume a national character. The departing tribes had no ark to take with them, no visible symbol of the presence of the deity, no spot at which they could gather for worship. This fact appeared to strike them as a want as soon as they had put the deep defile of Jordan between themselves and their brother tribes. It is no wonder that they should feel cut off by this natural chasm from the privileges still to be possessed by their brethren in the west. They began to fear lest in time to come their descendants should be taunted and denied the right to claim the God of Israel as their God. *In time to come your children might speak unto our children, saying, What have ye to do with Jehovah, the God of Israel?* They accordingly erected an altar on the verge of the Jordan valley, to be a witness that, in crossing that river, they had not abandoned their faith, but still believed they shared the covenant with the nation's God.

Action of Phinehas—War averted.—Their act was misinterpreted. They were accused of the very thing which they dreaded, and against which their altar was intended to be a protest—separation from the common worship. Happily Phinehas, who had been hastily despatched on what seemed likely to be another sacred war, showed himself now as wise and large minded as against the Midianites he had shown himself zealous and fiery. He accepted the explanation, that the altar was never intended for sacrifice but only for a witness, as offered in good faith, and refused to denounce as a moral sin what at most was only an error of judgment.

Joshua's Farewell to Israel.—Joshua, feeling his end to be near, took a solemn leave of Israel. Of this leave-taking we have two accounts. In both it is the soldier of Jehovah who speaks, recalling the victories gained through the Divine strength, and exhorting to loyalty and fidelity in the future.

It was under an oak, or terebinth, at Shechem—the consecrated oak, no doubt, of Abraham and Jacob—that the great assembly of elders, heads, judges, and officers was convened to hear the aged captain (110 years are assigned to him) give his farewell address. And here, where the patriarchs of the race had erected the first altar to the God of Israel, the people now once more solemnly dedicated themselves to His service.

And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve Jehovah, for He is an holy God; He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgression nor your sins. If ye forsake Jehovah, and serve strange gods, then He will turn and do you hurt and consume you, after that He hath done you good. And the people said unto Joshua, Nay, but we will serve Jehovah. And Joshua said unto the people, Ye are witnesses against yourselves that ye have chosen you Jehovah, to serve Him. And they said, We are witnesses. Now therefore put away, said he, the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart unto Jehovah, the God of Israel. And the people said unto Joshua, Jehovah our God will we serve, and unto His voice will we hearken. So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem. And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God; and took a great stone and set it up there under the oak, that was by the sanctuary of Jehovah.

Joshua was buried in the inheritance which had been given him—as though he were a tribe in himself—in Timnath-serah (*Timnath-heres*, Judg. ii. 9); and in his grave, according to an ancient tradition, were placed the flint knives that had been used at Gilgal. It is stated that quite recently the tomb has been identified by the discovery of ancient flint weapons.

Change from Nomadic to Agricultural Life—Religious Degeneracy.—It is melancholy to find, even in Joshua's farewell address, that a degeneration in religion had already begun. He adjures the people to put away *the strange gods* among them. It was one of the consequences of passing from a nomadic to a settled life. The fertility of Palestine has always affected immigrants from the desert in two ways: it meant to them at once a rise in civilisation and a fall in religion.

*He found him in a desert land,
And in the waste howling wilderness;
He compassed him about, He cared for him,*

*He kept him as the apple of His eye ;
 As an eagle that stirreth up her nest,
 That fluttereth over her young,
 He spread abroad His wings, He took them,
 He bare them on His pinions :
 The LORD alone did lead him,
 And there was no strange god with him.
 He made him ride upon the high places of the earth,
 And he did eat the increase of the field (Deut. xxxii. 10).*

That is a poetic description of the change from the nomadic to the agricultural life, and in glowing terms all the advantages of such a change are described in the poem from which the quotation is made, and that which follows it.

But the decline in religion also appears :

*But Jeshurun (a poetical term for Israel) waxed fat, and kicked.
 Thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art become sleek ;
 Then he forsook God which made him,
 And lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation.*

Worship of Strange Gods.—The historian confirms the poet. In the Book of Judges (ii. 11–13) we read that *the children of Israel did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baalim* ; and again, that they *forsook Jehovah, and served Baal and the Ashtaroth* ; and again (iii. 7), *served the Baalim and the Asheroth*.

Baal.—*Baal* means “lord” or “proprietor,” and requires a complement, as Baal-Tsor, Lord of Tyre, Baal-Sidon, Baal-zebub, Baal-berith. These were all Canaanitish divinities, who had, besides, proper names, *e.g.* Melkart, the Baal of Tyre. The Canaanites might have spoken of Jehovah as *Baal-Shiloh*, which indicates how very easy the lapse was from the worship of Jehovah to that of one, or more than one, of the Baals. Indeed, from Hosea ii. 16 we gather that in the northern kingdom Baal was used of Israel’s God. Baal was also used absolutely as the special name of the God of the races of Canaan, as Bel was of the Babylonians. According to some scholars, the plural, *The Baalim*, implies majesty, and is equivalent to *The Great Baal*.

Ashtoreth.—Ashtoreth is Astarte, one of the most widely venerated of the Semitic deities. In Babylonia and Assyria she was known as Ishtar. A masculine form, Ashtar Kemosh, appears on the Moabite Stone. She was the moon-goddess, as

in Ashtaroath-Karnaim, "the city of the two-horned moon," or the star-goddess (Venus).

Asheroth, plural of Asherah (wrongly translated "grove" in A.V.), were symbolical poles set up near an altar. In this verse, however, it is evidently the name of a divinity, and may be a textual error for *Astarte* (cf. 2 Kings xxiii. 4). Some, however, think it was actually a name of a Canaanitish goddess of fortune. Perhaps the sacred poles were usually connected with the worship of Astarte, and so came to be symbols of that goddess. The nomadic life was unquestionably more favourable to monotheism than the life of cities, for it is lived, as it were, in one vast sanctuary, where nature seems ever to answer with one and the same voice. The Israelite found in Syria a land teeming with holy places, and voiceful with a thousand oracles. It is hardly to be wondered at that the people, intoxicated with the lavish gifts of their new home, *went astray on every high hill and under every green tree*.

Debased View of their own Religion. — But it was not only by lapses into the idolatrous cults of their neighbours that the religious sentiment of Israel showed signs of corruption after the entrance into the Promised Land. The noble conception of the character of God attained by Moses had probably been from the first beyond the grasp of the people he led. His great mind was free from the danger inherent to giving, if we may so say, a proper name to the Deity. Jehovah was, it is true, in his view specially the God of Israel, but not merely, as Chemosh was god of Moab, Baal god of the Canaanites, a Lord with a tribe of slaves to minister to Him. He was Israel's Father; and he was also Lord of Life, the Author of the moral law, spiritual, and so impossible of representation to the senses by image or resemblance. But this was too pure a creed for the people. They could only think of their God as a Lord who favoured them, bound to declare they were right even when they were wrong. And since He had a favourite nation, why not a favourite family, a favourite individual? And how could such a belief maintain itself but by the means of visible images, signs, oracles? Even the patriarchal families had their *teraphim*, little images of wood, or clay, or metal. These became very common after the settlement in Palestine. And with them was generally associated an *ephod*, which, whether it were a dress or a figure, was employed, in some way no longer intelligible,

for obtaining oracular responses. An incident preserved towards the end of the Book of Judges, but belonging to an earlier period, shows these debasing elements of the religion of the time in an interesting and picturesque way.

It is also bound up with the adventures of the tribe of Dan.

The Story of Micah.—It was the time when *there was no king in Israel, and every man did that which was right in his own eyes*. There dwelt in the mountains of Ephraim a man named Micah. He had in his house a number of sacred images and utensils, made with gold that in a moment of temptation he had stolen from his mother, but afterwards restored. The house so richly furnished gained repute as a sanctuary and oracle, receiving the name "House of God." Its sanctity was further increased by an accident which brought a wandering Levite that way, who became Micah's priest in the place of his son, whom he had first consecrated. Micah, like many a feudal noble, was eager to secure the services and sanction of a regular chaplain. The Levite, like many a feudal priest, was willing to secure *ten shekels of silver by the year, a suit of apparel, and his victuals*.¹

The Danite Scouts.—The tribe of Dan, finding its position close to the Philistines untenable, were sending five scouts, *men of valour from Zorah and from Eshtaol*, to explore towards the north for a new territory. And it happened that, crossing Mount Ephraim, they heard of the oracle of Micah, and wished to consult it as to the good or evil issue of their enterprise. In their lodging in the caravanserai they were arrested by the sound of a familiar voice. It was that of the Levite from Bethlehem, with whom they had been acquainted. They asked his business there, and heard his story. *And they said unto him, Ask counsel, we pray thee, of God, that we may know whether our way which we go shall be prosperous. And the priest said unto them, Go in peace : before Jehorah is your way wherein ye go.*

The Danite Migration.—The report they gave of Laish, a Sidonian town in the extreme north, but too distant from its parent city to receive help, encouraged the Danites to emigrate in a body ; and taking Micah's house on their way, they easily persuaded the young Levite, who appears to have been a grandson of Moses himself, to go with them, and take the sacred vessels and images.

¹ Stanley, *Jewish Church*, Lect. XIII. vol. i. 297.

Theft of the Teraphim.—*Do ye know?* they said, as they approached the well-known cluster of houses on the hillside, *Do ye know that there is in these homes an ephod and teraphim, and a graven image and a molten image? Now, therefore, consider what ye have to do.* In the centre of the settlement rose the house of Micah, at its gateway was the dwelling of the Levite. By the gateway the six hundred armed warriors stood conversing with their ancient neighbour, whilst the five men stole up the rocky court and into the little chapel, and fetched away the images, and, long before they were discovered, were far along their northern route. The priest had raised his voice against the theft for a moment, *What do ye?* but there was a ready bribe: *Hold thy peace. Lay thine hand upon thy mouth and go with us, and be to us a father and a priest. Is it better for thee to be a priest unto the house of one man, or that thou become a priest unto a tribe and family in Israel?* The incident has been compared with one that occurs in the history of Canterbury Cathedral. Roger, a monk of the neighbouring Abbey of St. Augustine, was bribed, by a promise of the abbacy, to steal from its shrine its most sacred relic, part of the skull of Thomas à Becket.

Capture of Laish.—Micah went in pursuit, but was not strong enough to attack the marauders, who succeeded in their enterprise, took Laish, and made of it another Dan, establishing there, under the Levite, a sanctuary and order of priesthood which rivalled Shiloh, and existed as long as the ark was at that place.

Moral Degeneracy.—With the corruption of religion went inevitably a corruption of morals. City life soon developed city vices and crimes. Of this we have an awful picture in another appendix to the Book of Judges, in which a terrible and revolting crime, on the part of the Benjamites of Gibeah, led to sanguinary reprisals on that tribe, ending in its almost total extinction. Only six hundred of the warlike tribe escaped to a fastness on the rock Rimmon, to the north-east of Gibeah, and maintained themselves there. The other tribes, in their abhorrence of the crime, had vowed never to give their daughters in marriage with Benjamites, but, on calmer reflection, lest a tribe should disappear from Israel, they supplied the remnant with wives, partly at the expense of a town on the east of the Jordan, Jabesh-Gilead, which was destroyed for refusing to take part in the war, and partly by conniving at a ruse, which recalls

an incident in early Roman story, by which the Benjamites waylaid and carried off the maidens of Shiloh, who came, joyful and unsuspecting, to take part in the vintage festival.

XLVII. THE JUDGES

JUDG. iii. 7-xvi. ; 1 SAM. xii. 10, 11 ; HEB. xi. 32.

Man's extremity, God's opportunity.

Sanctuaries. — As long as Joshua lived the tribes of Israel, though they might prefer, or be forced by circumstances, to act independently, always had a head to whom to look if united action became necessary. But after his death the want of a single chief was greatly felt. Even the attempts at religious centralisation were only partially successful. The ark, which was at first at Gilgal, appears to have been removed during Joshua's life to Bethel, which, in the times of the monarchy, became the most famous holy place in Central Palestine. The only mention of the ark in Judges (xx. 18-27) places it here, and shows us a deputation going to Bethel to inquire of Jehovah if vengeance should be taken on the Benjamites of Gibeah. When the transference to Shiloh took place we do not know, but a strong attempt was plainly made to elevate that place not only into a religious centre, but into a capital. It had, however, rivals, where sacrifices were offered, and where God could be consulted in duly established form. Gilgal, for example, continued, even when deprived of the ark, to retain its character of sanctuary. We have seen the Danites consecrate a house of God at Laish. Gibeah had a great name for sanctity, being called "the Hill of God." Mizpah in Benjamin, and Mizpah of Gilead, were also centres of worship. Even private individuals had their ephods and their priests.

Need of Centralisation. — In undisturbed times this arrangement probably suited the popular disposition, for the old Bedawin character still clung to the settlers. Family life, without any fixed government, was their ideal.

But in the presence of unfriendly neighbours the defects of such a system, or want of system, soon became apparent. The land still swarmed with hostile cities and communities. On

the sea-coast were the powerful Philistines. In the plain of Esdraelon were the unsubdued fortresses of Taanach, Megiddo, Ibleam, and, most formidable of all, Bethshean, with its iron war-chariots, and its temple of Astarte, the Jebus of the north, which remained under the name Scythopolis, a Gentile city, even to the Christian era. To the north were the Syrians, eager to avenge Merom; to the east, Moab and Ammon, always jealous and watchful, and behind them hordes of Midianite and other Arab tribes, with the vast and mysterious power of Assyria far away behind all.

This state of things was designed in God's providence to prove Israel in two respects. First, in regard to their courage and warlike capacity. *So Jehovah left those nations, without driving them out hastily* (Judg. ii. 23) . . . *only that the generations of the children of Israel might know, to teach them war, at the least such as beforetime knew nothing thereof* (Judg. iii. 2).

Secondly, in regard to their loyalty to their God. *I will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died: that by them I may prove Israel, whether he will keep the way of Jehovah to walk therein, as their fathers did keep it, or not* (Judg. ii. 21-23).

Character of the Judges.—The Judges answer to both needs. They were generally tribal heroes, giving proof of individual prowess or marked military genius. They also appeared in the emergency, men called by God for a purpose: called like the prophets, and in some cases with prophetic gift; and when their exertions, joined to their trust in the power of God, had brought the deliverance, they assumed or resumed the character of magistrate or ruler, and exercised jurisdiction as well as judicial functions.

Meaning of Judge.—The name *shofet*, the original for *judge*, is not only *judea*, but also *vinder*, and is not infrequently synonymous with *deliverer*. It was probably adopted from the Canaanites. It reappears as *sufet*, the title of a Carthaginian magistrate at the time of the Punic wars. The title, Book of Judges, was meant to correspond to Book of Kings, as giving the succession of the rulers and defenders of Israel before the monarchy. In the book itself, however, the title *judge* is not given to all the deliverers, *e.g.* Ehud, Barak, Gideon.

Chronology of the Period.—The period of the Judges, who, counting Abimelech, and not reckoning Eli or Samuel, were

twelve in number, extends, according to the chronology of the book itself, over 410 years. But it is generally agreed that the documents, whatever their date, which the compiler of the Book of Judges had before him, were combined and edited centuries after the events recorded; and the passages containing dates, which must by their style be attributed to the editor, may be a merely conjectural arrangement. The recurrence of the numbers 40 (the usual Hebrew *round* number), 80, and 20 here points to an artificial adjustment. The writer of 1 Kings vi. 1 gives 480 years as the period between the Exodus and the commencement of the Temple building, apparently intending 12 generations of 40 years each. There are great difficulties in this chronology. It cannot be easily reconciled with that of the Book of Judges.

The difficulty of fixing a date for the beginning of the judicial period is still greater. If the Exodus may be placed at the close of the 14th century, and 1250 B.C. be taken as an approximation to the date of the entry into Palestine, we may now have reached about 1230 B.C. The following table shows how the number of 410 years is reached:—

| | Years. |
|--|--------|
| Servitude under <i>Cushan-rishathaim</i> | 8 |
| Rest under OTHNIEL | 40 |
| Servitude under <i>Moab</i> | 18 |
| Rest under EHUD | 80 |
| Servitude under <i>Jabin</i> | 20 |
| Rest under DEBORAH and BARAK | 40 |
| Oppression of the <i>Midianites</i> | 7 |
| Rest under GIDEON | 40 |
| Tyranny of ABIMELECH | 3 |
| Judgeship of TOLA | 23 |
| „ JAIR | 22 |
| Oppression of the <i>Ammonites</i> | 18 |
| Judgeship of JEPHTHAH | 6 |
| „ IBZAN | 7 |
| „ ELON | 10 |
| „ ABDON | 8 |
| Oppression of the <i>Philistines</i> | 40 |
| Judgeship of SAMSON | 20 |
| | <hr/> |
| | 410 |

Of these, Shamgar, Tola, Jair, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon, whose exploits are told only summarily, are sometimes called the "minor" judges. Abdon may be the name appearing as Bedan in 1 Sam. xii. 11, or that name may be a copyist's error for Barak.

Of Othniel, Ehud, and Shamgar, we do not know whether they exercised any authority beyond the limits of the special crises which called them forth. Deborah was already in a position of importance as prophetess and judge before the emergency which united her with Barak, and her authority, like that of Gideon, remained with her for life.

The Hereditary Principle.—In Gideon we find the attempt to found a dynasty, and in the succession of the obscure rulers who follow, the hereditary principle has established itself. So the way was prepared for Samuel, who left the judicial office to his sons, and for the monarchy that so soon followed.

The Oppressors of the Israelites.—The main story of the Book of Judges begins at chap. ii. 6. After telling of the death of Joshua, and giving a summary description of the idolatries which led to the foreign oppressions from which the Judges were successively to deliver the country, it enumerates the nations *left to prove Israel*.

The Philistines.—At their head it places the five lords of the Philistines, *i.e.* the tyrants of the cities Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Gath, and Ekron. The conquest of the seaboard containing these towns by this remarkable people appears to have taken place during the reign of the Egyptian Pharaoh, Ramses III., and therefore about the same period as the invasion of Canaan by Israel.

The Canaanites.—The term Canaanites (the people next mentioned) was sometimes a comprehensive name for all the populations west of Jordan, but at other times, as here, was restricted to the inhabitants of the lowlands of Western and South-Western Palestine.

The Zidonians.—The Zidonians were the people of Phœnicia.

The Hittites.—*The Hivites that dwell in Mount Lebanon* should apparently be the Hittites whom the Egyptian inscriptions place in Cœle Syria and the Lebanon. They were a warlike race, powerful enough to contend successfully both with Egypt and Assyria. Their great city, Hamath, was the modern *Hama* on the Orontes; and *the entering in of Hamath*

was the opening formed by the intersection of four passes about thirty miles to its south.

But it was not with any of these that the earliest struggles were to be. As yet, those who *were to prove Israel to know whether they would hearken unto the commandments of the LORD, which He commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses*, were to be foes from the East.

XLVIII. FROM OTHNIEL TO DEBORAH AND BARAK

JUDG. iii. 6-v.

Thou art an Amazon,
And fightest with the sword of Deborah.

Joshua's task was rather to ensure the ultimate subjection of Palestine than to subdue it. Israel had set a firm foot in the land, and that at several points. They had also begun to intermarry with its previous inhabitants, and to ally themselves with them in many ways, notably and sadly in religion. *They took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their own daughters to their sons, and served their gods.*

It is plain that much was left to the future. Of attempts at conquest by the tribes acting for themselves we have an instance in the exploit of the Danites already narrated. With this exception, the work of forming fresh settlements, or strengthening those already formed, is rather implied than told in the Book of Judges. This has for its object to tell of the deliverances wrought from foreign enemies.

Othniel.—The earliest of these brings on the scene again Othniel, brother or nephew of Caleb. The oppressor was Cushan-rishathaim, king of Mesopotamia. If the name has a Hebrew origin it may imply (being a dual) *Cushan the double-dyed villain*. Except the fact of his eight years' oppressive occupation, presumably of the south of Judah, we know nothing of this king. Othniel became judge, and the land had rest forty years.

Very different is the story of the next deliverance. It is a

real bit of Hebrew folk-lore, and was doubtless a favourite in the tribe of Benjamin, where it would be repeated at each festal gathering with delight in its every detail. For its hero is a Benjamite.

The Moabite Oppression—Eglon.—Following the example of Israel itself, Moab, with a contingent from the more nomadic Ammon and Amalek, crossed the Jordan, and established strong garrisons at Gilgal and Jericho. The historian sees in this a Divine punishment. *And the children of Israel did that which was evil again in the sight of Jehovah, and Jehovah strengthened the king of Moab, Eglon, against Israel.*

It is curious to find Mesha, a successor of Eglon's, some centuries later inscribing on his pillar a similar sentence: "Omri oppressed Moab a long time, because Chemosh was angry with his land."

For eighteen years the foreign tyranny lasted. A heavy tribute had been imposed, and was paid year by year, till at last the time of deliverance came.

Ehud.—It was a youth named Ehud ben Gera, left-handed, like so many of his tribe whom Jehovah raised up as a saviour. After offering the *present* with which he was intrusted, he dismissed the retinue of porters, and, cleverly securing a secret interview, and, getting the corpulent monarch to rise, by pretending that he was the bearer of a sacred message, he assassinated him; and locking the door of the cool parlour on the roof, where Eglon had taken refuge from the heat of the stifling ghor, he made his escape by a gallery, roused his tribes by blasts of a cow-horn, seized the fords, and easily exterminated the foe thus cut off from retreat. *So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel, and the land had rest fourscore years.*

Shamgar and the Philistine Oppression.—A certain Shamgar ben Anath was judge during a period disturbed by the Philistines. To what tribe this hero belonged we are not told. His name is foreign, and from his connection in Deborah's Song with Jael, it has been conjectured that he was a Kenite. But *Samgar-Nebo* appears (Jer. xxxix. 3) as the name of a vassal of the king of Babylon, and in an Assyrian inscription of the ninth century B.C., *Sangar* is a Hittite prince. The verse which preserves his exploit of killing 600 Philistines with an ox-goad reads like a fragment of a lost poem. It was one of those

exploits whose hero would naturally find a place in popular song, side by side with the lion- and giant-killers, in the Book of the Wars of Jehovah, or in the Book of Jashar, of which such precious fragments have been preserved, as he had in Deborah's great song, which paints in two or three lifelike words the desolation and dismay caused by the Philistine oppression, when *the highways were unoccupied*, and travellers had to creep stealthily along on their business by secret and winding paths.

The Canaanite Oppression—Jabin and Sisera.—The scene of the next deliverance was the plain of Esdraelon, where so many battles were to be fought. The oppressor was Jabin, a name (or title) already written in the story of Hebrew warfare.

And the children of Israel again did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, after Ehud was dead. And the LORD sold them into the hand of Jabin, king of Canaan, that reigned in Hazor; the captain of whose host was Sisera, which dwelt in Harosheth of the Gentiles. And the children of Israel cried unto the LORD: for he had nine hundred chariots of iron; and twenty years he mightily oppressed the children of Israel.

Hazor, not yet satisfactorily identified, was somewhere to the west of Lake Huleh (the waters of Merom), and in the neighbourhood of Kedesh-Naphtali, now Kedes, the native place of the coming deliverer. Harosheth of the Nations, where his general, Sisera, was posted, is now el Harathiyeh, in the narrowest part of the Kishon Pass, where the northern hills bend down almost to touch Carmel. The three northern tribes, Issachar, Zebulun, and Naphtali, were thus completely hemmed in, while the strong Canaanite fortresses of Taanach, Megiddo, and Jezreel seemed to close every avenue of help from the central and southern tribes. And they, too, seemed completely overawed, or, even if they had the spirit to fight, were but an army of peasants, with but the weapons of peasants; so that there was not *a shield or a spear seen among forty thousand in Israel*.

Deborah.—Then Deborah arose. *Deborah arose a mother in Israel.* She judged Israel at this time, sitting under her palm tree on the heights of Ephraim, the central thoroughfare of Palestine, not far from the sanctuary of Bethel. Thither, "as to Saul afterwards under the pomegranate tree of Migron, as to St. Louis under the oak of Vincennes," came those who

had questions or cases to Deborah ("the Bee"), wife of Lapidoth. She was such a woman as Hind, the daughter of Otbah, recorded in Arab song; as the German prophetess Velede, who roused her people against the Roman invaders; as the French peasant girl, who inspired her countrymen to beat off the English domination. God called her to deliver, and she arose.

She sent an order, in the name of Jehovah, to Barak ben Abinoam, a man of Kedesh-Naphtali, a place almost within sight of Jabin's capital, and where the hated oppression must have been most keenly felt, to rally the men of the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali, and march on Tabor, engaging herself to draw Sisera out of his encampment, and deliver him into his hand. Tabor, now Gebel el-Tor, is at the head of the northern arm of the Great Plain, an admirable rallying-place.

Barak.—Barak, as his name, which afterwards appears among the warriors of Carthage,—Barca, "Lightning,"—implies, was a man with the making of a hero in him; but at first he hesitated, and declined the mission, unless Deborah would herself take part in it. Whether it was her inspiration he most desired, or the help of the southern tribes, whom she could arouse and bring with her, we are not told; but his request brought down upon him the rebuke, that to make conditions in an adventure promises not fame but shame. *I will go, I will go*, she said with Hebrew emphasis; *notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honour; for the Lord shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman.*

The Patriotic Tribes.—The prose narrative only tells us that *Deborah arose, and went with Barak to Kedesh*. But in the magnificent lyric that sang the triumph we actually see and hear the mustering of the clans and the gathering of the host. The faith and courage of the prophetess worked wonders. Her enthusiasm was catching. In a moment the fire of patriotic zeal flamed up. It spread through all the ranks. The good cause united all: *the governors of Israel, who willingly offered themselves*; the nobles, riding on their dappled asses; the rich and elegant, on their sumptuous carpets; the humble wayfarers who met on the road. We hear the war-cry of Benjamin, the rush of the thousands of Ephraim, the march of the *élite* of Manasseh, the mustering of Zebulun as they pass before the marshals with their bâtons. And Issachar is prominent—

Issachar ready to make one bold stroke to get back its inheritance in Esdraelon, now in the hands of the foe.

The Cowardly Tribes.—And, alas! we hear, too, the cowardly objections of the faint-hearted, who feared to join. Reubenites, sitting between the sheepfolds, listening to *the pipings for the flocks*, instead of following the trumpet's call, and vainly trying to suppress the unpleasant accusations that molest traitors; Gad, unwilling to leave the pastures of Gilead; Dan and Asher, afraid to try the guarded passes, and hiding in the creeks of the shore, or taking refuge in their ships.

The Battle of Harosheth.—The army at length collected by Barak, and, posted probably on the slope of Tabor, at a spot still recalling Deborah's name, *Deburiyeh*, numbered ten thousand. Sisera heard it from the Kenites, who, encamped to the west of the Lake of Galilee, wavered between fear of Jabin and their traditional attachment to Israel. And he *gathered together all his chariots, even nine hundred chariots of iron, and all the people that were with him, from Harosheth of the Gentiles, unto the river Kishon. And Deborah said unto Barak, Up; for this is the day in which the Lord hath delivered Sisera into thine hand: is not the Lord gone out before thee? And Barak went down from Mount Tabor, and ten thousand men after him.* The Kishon, after Jordan the most considerable stream in the land of Israel, flows through the great plain nearly parallel to the range of Carmel, and enters the Mediterranean at Haifa.

The prose account of the actual battle that followed is concise, and we learn nothing from it but that the wild rush of the Israelites completely routed Sisera's army. *And the Lord discomfited Sisera, and all his chariots, and all his host, with the edge of the sword before Barak; and Sisera lighted down from his chariot, and fled away on his feet. But Barak pursued after the chariots, and after the host, unto Harosheth of the Gentiles: and all the host of Sisera fell by the edge of the sword; and there was not a man left.*

The Song of Victory.—The poetical account is full of graphic touches: the sudden storm, in which the very heavens seemed to fight for Israel; the confusion of the rout and flight, rendered doubly terrible by the swollen river, that swept away chariot and horse and man; and the entanglement in the marshy ground, where in vain the horses stamped and plunged,

only to wear out their strength in useless rage. And we learn that the brunt of the battle took place at Taanach, where the kings—Sisera himself is reckoned among them; possibly a league had formed round Jabin, as in the time of Joshua—first received or gave the attack.

*The kings came and fought ;
Then fought the kings of Canaan,
In Taanach by the waters of Megiddo :
They took no gain of money.
They fought from heaven,
The stars in their courses fought against Sisera.
The river Kishon swept them away,
That ancient river, the river Kishon.
O my soul, march on with strength.
Then did the horse-hoofs stamp,*

By reason of the pransings, the pransings of their strong ones.

Sisera slain by Jael.—After the pursuit to Harosheth, Barak turned his attention to Sisera, who made his way, possibly over the hills, to the camp of the Kenites, where he was confident he might find a refuge. And, in fact, Jael, Heber's wife, received him kindly, and treated him with the usual Oriental hospitality, hiding him in her own tent, and giving him to drink the sour milk the Arab finds so refreshing. But at heart her sympathies were with Israel; and when, wearied out, the fugitive warrior fell asleep, she committed the foul deed which, in the spirit of the age, as if the end justified the means, Deborah's song commends so highly.

The prose narrative tells the sad tale simply. *Howbeit Sisera fled away on his feet to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite : for there was peace between Jabin, king of Hazor, and the house of Heber the Kenite. And Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said unto him, Turn in, my lord, turn in to me : fear not. And when he had turned in unto her into the tent she covered him with a rug. And he said unto her, Give me, I pray thee, a little water to drink ; for I am thirsty. And she opened a bottle of milk, and gave him drink, and covered him. Again he said unto her, Stand in the door of the tent, and it shall be, when any man doth come and inquire of thee, and say, Is there any man here ? that thou shalt say, No. Then Jael, Heber's wife, took a tent-pin, and took an hammer in her hand, and went softly unto him, and smote the pin into his temples, and it*

pierced through into the ground ; for he was in a deep sleep ; so he swooned and died.

But the song dwells with savage exultation over every detail of the ghastly deed. It describes the lordly dish or bowl in which the cream was brought, and every action of the assassin : *She put her (left) hand to the nail and her right hand to the workman's hammer ;* and makes the very language tell how she battered the head of her victim as he lay in trustful sleep, and pronounces Jael *blessed above women.*

Retreat of Jabin's Army—The Curse of Meroz.—It is probable that one part of Jabin's army had managed to turn and fly in a north-easterly direction towards Hazor. The inhabitants of Meroz might have cut them off, but drew down on themselves a terrible curse for their indifference. But the death of Sisera amply made up for the escape of part of his troops ; and Deborah ends her song with an imaginary scene, which enabled her to depict the grief and disappointment of his court, —he was hardly less than a prince,—a disappointment all the keener because of previous certainty of triumph.

XLIX. GIDEON

JUDG. vi.-viii.

Do Thou unto them as unto Midian.

Make their nobles like Oreb and Zeeb ;
Yea, all their princes like Zeba and Zalmunna,
Who said, Let us take to ourselves in possession
The habitations of God.

O my God, make them like the whirling dust,
As stubble before the wind.
As fire that burneth the forest,
And as the flame that setteth the mountains on fire,
So pursue them with Thy tempest,
And terrify them with Thy storm.

The Israelites and the neighbouring Arabs.—¹ “Owing to the love of order and laborious habits of Israel, a great number of rich and powerful families were formed ; but on all sides the nation, like an undefended town, was open to attack. It was

¹ Renan, *History of the People of Israel*, bk. ii. ch. ix.

impossible to found anything solid. Israel had not only to fight against the Canaanites, the Philistines, the Moabites, the Ammonites, but to repel the invasions of the Arabs of the great desert, known by the generic name of Bene-Kedem (children of the East), or Orientals (*Saracens*), who came with their camels, especially after seed-time, encamped in the open, and destroyed the growing crops like a plague of locusts. They would advance as far as Gaza, where the Philistines stopped them. Then they returned to the desert, carrying away with them all the flocks and beasts of burden."

The Midianites.—Allied with them, if not included in them, were often other Arabian or Bedawin tribes. The most formidable of these nomads was Midian. Part of this important tribe—most important of those akin to Israel, being descendants of Abraham by Keturah—was settled in a district east of the Gulf of Akabah, which was called the Land of Midian. Joined with the Midianites were Amalekites, whose haunts were chiefly to the south of Palestine.

Arab Invasions.—"These annual invasions kept the people in terror. They did not dare to fight in the open ground. When the pillagers arrived, the Israelites barricaded themselves in caverns, or improvised fortresses in the mountains. From this epoch are supposed to date the fortified caverns, and the *masada*, or hilltops covered with stones, which are so common in Palestine, and which on many occasions served the people of the plain as refuges against sudden invasion."

The Story of Gideon.—This miserable state of things lasted for seven years, when the heroic Gideon was raised to deliver his people. A nameless prophet had already appeared, to arouse the drooping spirit of the nation. But Gideon, the "Hewer," who was to do the work, received a special call. His story is an epic poem, which abounds in marvellous incidents, each of them emphasising the fact of the Divine call. Where profane history sees only successful courage or stratagem, the historians of Israel see always the hand of God. Thus Josephus tells us how a young man came to Gideon to bid him be of good courage. But in the Bible it is the angel of Jehovah who appears, while, to hide it from the Midianites, Gideon is threshing his corn, not on the open threshing-floor, but in the sunk wine-press. The meal which he prepares beneath the terebinth of Ophrah becomes a sacrifice, which is laid on the

summit of the consecrated rock, and suddenly consumed at the touch of the staff of the heavenly messenger, who vanishes amidst the cries of alarm which the terrified Gideon utters at the consciousness of the Divine Presence, till he receives the assurance *Jehovah Shalom* (i.e. Jehovah is well-disposed), the name which afterwards clings to the spot.

He destroys the Altar of Baal.—The work of Gideon was twofold. He had first to inaugurate a reaction against the Phœnician cult of Baal, with which his own clan, that of Abiezer, was deeply tainted. Its chief, Joash, Gideon's father, had an altar for this worship, and by it an Asherah, or pole, where, if such is the interpretation of a somewhat obscure passage, he was in the habit of offering a bullock daily. This altar one morning the villagers, assembling for the usual sacrifice, found destroyed, the pole cut down, and a new altar, to Jehovah, erected. It was the work of Gideon and his ten servants. An indignant remonstrance was made to Joash, but his only answer was to accuse the complainants of impiety for suggesting that Baal could not protect his own worship. *Will ye plead for Baal?* A name, formed from the saying which took various forms, — Jerub-baal, Jerub-bosheth, Hierobaal, and Hierombal,—attached itself to Gideon, and even penetrated into the Gentile world. It was of course equivalent to a declaration that if Baal was divine he could take his own part.

His warlike Fame.—But the iconoclast was also to prove a hero. The family of Abiezer had suffered more than loss of property at the hands of Midian. Gideon's brothers had fallen in a Midianite raid at Mount Tabor. It was up the valley of Jezreel, under the hills of his tribe Manasseh, that the yearly inroad was made. Gideon was already esteemed as a true *Gibbor*, hero, mighty man. Everything marked him out as the coming deliverer, especially his religious zeal, when *the spirit of Jehovah came upon him; and he blew a trumpet; and Abiezer was gathered after him. And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh; and they also were gathered together after him: and he sent messengers unto Asher, and unto Zebulun, and unto Naphtali; and they came up to meet them.*

His Character—Episode of the Fleece.—In the character of Gideon we discern three great qualities: promptitude, caution, and magnanimity. The two former are rarely united

as we see them here. Though ready for the adventure, this hero will not start on it till auguries have made the issue sure. The fleece, wet when the ground around was dry, dry when all else was saturated with dew, supplies the promise of success, and also images his own character—cool and provident when caution is necessary, fiery hot when the moment to strike has come.

The Israelite Army.—The Israelite army, thirty-two thousand strong, was posted near the spring of Harod (trembling), now Ain-el-Jalud, about thirty-five minutes' ride east of Zerin, anciently Jezreel, under the rocky face of Gilboa. But it was far too large for its purpose. *And the Lord said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hand, lest Israel vaunt themselves against Me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me.* Hebrew strength lay in humility and faith.

Selection of the Three Hundred.—The customary proclamation, therefore, warning the faint-hearted to retire, went forth, and twenty-two thousand availed themselves of it. There remained ten thousand. But only hundreds were wanted for the surprise contemplated by Gideon; and all except three hundred, who *lapped, putting their hand to their mouth*, were detached, but no doubt held in readiness for taking part in the pursuit. Where the significance of this test lies is a sore puzzle. Their horns, and the earthenware pitchers, in which to this day the peasants of the country shelter their torches from the wind, were distributed to the chosen band, so that each warrior held one.

The Army of the Midianites.—The host of the Midianites were *on the north side of them, by the hill of Moreh, in the valley*. This Moreh was possibly the ancient name of the range of hills bounding the valley of Jezreel on the north, called later Little Hermon, and now Jebel el-Dahi. The name usually takes us to the neighbourhood of Shechem. *And the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the east lay along in the valley like locusts for multitude*; and picketed around them were their camels without number, *as the sand which is upon the sea shore for multitude*. Even a hero might hesitate to attack such a foe, with only three hundred men. It required a higher courage than that of Leonidas and his Spartans, for they had to defend a defile, and were supported by allies.

The Midianite's Dream.—But Gideon received a reassuring

augury. With his armour-bearer Phurah he was bidden visit the sleeping host, and, like Diomed and Ulysses when they penetrated the Thracian camp by night, the two crept silently down to where the sentries kept an indifferent watch. There they overheard a dream which one of the Arabs was telling a comrade: how a cake of barley bread—the peasant's food, an emblem of the insignificance of the means that were to effect the deliverance—had fallen into the camp and overturned *the tent, i.e. the Nomad's tent*. *And his fellow answered and said, This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel: for into his hand God hath delivered Midian, and all the host*. Gideon heard the good omen, bowed himself to the ground in thankful acknowledgment, and disappeared up the mountain-side.

Rout of the Midianites.—The sleepers and the dreamers slept on, to be rudely awakened by the blast of the pastoral horns, mingling with the terrible shout of Israel, as the pitchers crashed and showed the sudden glare of three hundred torches flaring in the midnight breeze; for it was the middle one of the Hebrew three watches, halfway between sunset and sunrise. The three bands into which the little attacking force had been divided needed no swords in their hands; for, in the awful panic that ensued, the various Arab tribes, then as now always jealous and suspicious of each other when there was plunder to be shared, fell to fighting among themselves, *and Jehovah set every man's sword against his fellow, and against all the host*. A hideous rout ensued, and, fighting as they went, they fled down the valley to the spots known as Beth-shittah, "House of the Acacia," and the lip or margin of Abel-meholah, "Meadow of the Dance," places in the Jordan valley, but not easy of identification.

The one desire was to reach the ford of Bethbarah. Its locality is unknown. All we see is that the fugitives poured down into the defile of the Jordan by the side of some stream that enters it near a ford, for their pursuers *took the waters as far as Bethbarah*.

Destruction of Oreb and Zeeb by the Ephraimites.—And now was the moment of action for the troops that had been detached. But even they might not be enough to check the headlong flight and overpower the Arabs before they could cross. Therefore Gideon summoned Ephraim to his aid. The

great tribe was not slow to move, but could only intercept the rear of the vast host under the lesser chiefs Oreb and Zeeb ("the Raven" and "the Wolf"), whose heads they brought to Gideon, already over the Jordan, together with a proud remonstrance at not having been sooner summoned. His answer is a model of the forbearance which is able to avert strife. *Is not the gleanings of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer?*

Zeba and Zalmunna slain—Punishment of Succoth and Penuel.—*Faint yet pursuing*, Gideon with his Abiezrites pushed on after the greater chiefs Zeba and Zalmunna. The Gadites of Succoth and of Penuel ought to have aided him. They did nothing. They even refused to furnish the Abiezrites with bread. The Israelites beyond Jordan possessed little patriotism, or rather they were held in check by fear of the Bedawin. They refused to compromise themselves with dangerous neighbours, against whom the tribes of the west could not always protect them. The Midianites seem to have allowed themselves to be surprised. We cannot identify the places on Gideon's route, but he caught his foes and beat them at Karkor. Then he pursued the two kings Zeba and Zalmunna, and captured them. *What manner of men were those whom you killed at Tabor?* asked he of them. *Men like you*, they replied. *All were fine men like king's sons.* And Gideon said: *They were my brethren, the sons of my mother: as Jehovah liveth, if ye had saved them alive, I would not slay you. And he said to Jether his firstborn, Up and slay them.*

The young man hesitating to kill such great warriors, Zeba and Zalmunna said to Gideon: *Rise thou, and fall upon us: for as the man is, so is his strength.* And Gideon arose, and slew Zeba and Zalmunna, and he took the crescents that were on their camels' necks. These were chains formed of little metal crescents. Riding camels are still decorated with jingling ornaments of the kind. The crescents in the text were of gold. Returning by way of Penuel and Succoth, he cruelly punished the men of those two cities for their conduct when he had passed that way the first time.

Triumph of Gideon—Spoils of the Midianites.—"The return of Gideon to this side of Jordan was a triumph. His height, his beauty, his strength, proclaimed him a king. The raid he had made into the very heart of the east had procured treasures

for him. All the Arab tribes known under the name of Ishmaelites had greatly enriched themselves by commerce. The plunder captured from them astonished the poorer tribes of Israel. There were heaps of golden rings, collars, and crescents for the necks of the camels, ear-rings formed of a single pearl, rich purple garments."

The importance of this campaign and the profound impression it made on Israel are shown again and again in allusions of prophets and psalmists, down to the latest times. They delight to sing of the *rod of the oppressor broken, as in the days of Midian*; and the names of the four Arab chiefs who had fallen before Gideon's famous sword recur to them as often as Egypt itself, whenever they pray to their God to avenge them as of old.

L. FIRST ATTEMPTS AT ROYALTY

JUDG. viii. 22-ix.

Kings are like stars—they rise and set—they have
The worship of the world, but no repose.

Regal Position of Gideon.—Gideon's return from his victory was like a royal progress. He was met by crowds so full of admiration and enthusiasm that they offered him the state, if not the name, of king. They even wished him to found a dynasty. *Then the men of Israel said unto Gideon, Rule thou over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy son's son also: for thou hast saved us out of the hand of Midian. And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: Jehovah shall rule over you.* But he reigned notwithstanding, in all but regal name. In his military mantle he received the spoils of the whole army; and assuming the sacerdotal office, which afterwards, in the persons of David and Solomon, was associated with regal power, he made an ephod, which certainly in this case seems to have been an image, and, by setting it up for oracular purposes at Ophrah, made his house a sanctuary, which came into great repute, and so created what the historian describes as *a snare to Israel*. But Gideon's contemporaries appear to have seen nothing impious in his act. It appeared perfectly natural. Gideon was neither above nor below the religious ideas of his

time. He maintained his well-deserved honours to the close of a long life, and was buried in the tomb of his father Joash ; and, till long after, the popular voice continued to speak of all his goodness.

Gideon's Sons.—He had unfortunately anticipated one scandal which seems incidental to all Oriental monarchies. He had an enormous seraglio at Ophrah, and concubines in other towns, notably Shechem. It was reckoned that he had as many as seventy sons or more.

Abimelech and the Ephraimites.—One of these, by a Canaanitish woman of Shechem, was called Abimelech, a name indicating devotion to the religion of Melech or Moloch, possibly his mother's divinity. He, at least, was imbued with regal ideas. He either discovered or pretended to discover that some of his brothers were claiming to succeed to their father's dignities. Against them he constituted himself the champion of the pretensions of Shechem and the tribe of Ephraim. They were not slow to see their possible advantage, and furnished him with money from the temple of Baal-berith, a noted sanctuary of that locality.

Abimelech slaughters his Brothers.—With this he raised a band of idle ruffians, ready for any villainy. With cruel promptitude he at once marched on Ophrah, and slew all his brothers save one, who managed to escape. The massacre was made on one stone, possibly the same consecrated rock so memorable for a very different act of his father. This is the first recorded instance of the dreadful usage of Oriental monarchies,—"the slaughter of the brothers of kings,"—which was continued down to our own days in the Turkish Empire. But this inhuman treatment excited no horror. The historian narrates it without a shudder.

He is proclaimed King at Shechem.—Shechem welcomed the bloodstained Abimelech back, and made him king. This city—head, apparently, of a Canaanite league, that gathered around the temple of Baal-berith, that is, "Baal of the League,"—had not been so incorporated with Israel as to lose its desire for independence, and had never forgotten its founder Hamor, the father of Shechem. It was now to try the experiment of monarchy under Abimelech. *And all the men of Shechem assembled themselves together, and all the house of Millo, and went and made Abimelech king, by the oak of the pillar that*

was in Shechem. Under a holy tree at Shechem Jacob had concealed the idols and amulets of his household (Gen. xxxv. 4), and Joshua had set up the witness-stone (Josh. xxiv. 26). There appears from this passage to have been there one of those *pillars* afterwards condemned as idolatrous.

Jotham's Parable.—The experiment did not succeed. Jotham's parable, the first in Scripture, shows where the weakness of the attempt lay. The olive, the fig, the vine, emblems of really useful qualities, refuse to reign over the forest; and only the bramble, that is serviceable for nothing but a devouring fire, will accept the office. Abimelech was the bramble. He was brave to fierceness, but he had no other quality of a king. He could be but the tyrant of a moment. His rash attempt must end in a conflagration that would devour himself and all his confederates. *Let fire come out from Abimelech, and devour the men of Shechem, and the house of Millo* (we do not know where Beth-Millo was, possibly a fort in or near Shechem); *and let fire come out from the men of Shechem and the house of Millo and devour Abimelech.*

Abimelech's Difficulties.—So it came to pass. Abimelech enjoyed his precarious sovereignty for three years. Then quarrels arose between him and Shechem. Probably he could not succeed, as David after him did, in keeping his freebooters in check. The historian sees the hand of God here. *Then God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem; and the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech: that the violence done to the threescore and ten sons of Jerubbaal might come, and that their blood might be laid upon Abimelech their brother, which slew them, and upon the men of Shechem, which strengthened his hands to slay his brethren.* They started a system of brigandage, posting men on the hills commanding the two great roads that make the position of Shechem so important. Abimelech would suffer in reputation from this; and also, it may be that convoys of tribute to him might be cut off.

Conspiracy of Gaal.—A certain Gaal ben Ebed put himself at the head of the disaffected party. He reminded the Shechemites that after all Abimelech was no genuine Shechemite, but at best only a half-breed, and, moreover, son of the man who had proved himself so stern an antagonist of their god. He took advantage of the vintage feast held in honour of

Baal to *curse* Abimelech. Abimelech, who, whether from suspicion of the larger town or some other policy, was living at Arumah, was kept informed of the danger by his lieutenant, Zebul, who was an extremely crafty man, and succeeded in deluding Gaal till the king was prepared. A number of faction fights ensued, like those of the Italian towns of the Middle Ages. Abimelech at length got the upper hand, took the town, and drove the opposite faction into the citadel. Before attacking this retreat he completely destroyed Shechem, *and sowed it with salt*, an emblem of irretrievable ruin, since a salt land was, in Hebrew speech, synonymous with perpetual desolation. The citadel was only reduced by fire, Abimelech being the first man to cut down a faggot from the woods of Zalmon, a hill which cannot be identified.

Death of Abimelech.—He then attacked Thebez, a neighbouring town disaffected to him, with the same resistless energy; and again the beaten party took refuge in the tower or citadel. And again Abimelech was first at the gate with fire; but *a certain woman cast an upper millstone on his head*, and, to avoid the shame of such a death, he ordered his armour-bearer to thrust him through with his sword. So died Abimelech, and with him expired this first abortive attempt at monarchy. The idea was in the air; but the time was not yet ready for its realisation, nor had the man come.

Judgeships of Jair, Ibzan, and Abdon—Growth of the Monarchical Idea.—We see the tendency to hereditary succession showing itself in the obscure judges who followed. Jair, with his thirty sons, all riding like princes on she-asses, and giving their names to thirty villages—Havoth-Jair—in Gilead; Ibzan, with his thirty daughters, whose hands, as those of princesses, are sought by ambassadors from neighbouring cities; and Abdon, with his forty sons and thirty grandsons—all by the state they assumed indicate a growing desire in the still scattered people to become more of a nation, with a settled dynastic rule. But the true king of Israel is still in the far distance.

But the sacred narrative itself does not make a reflection of this kind. It dwells on the moral of the story, and the instance it supplied of Divine retribution. *Thus God requited the wickedness of Abimelech, which he did unto his father, in slaying his seventy brethren: and all the wickedness of the men of Shechem did God requite upon their heads.*

LI. JEPHTHAH AND HIS DAUGHTER

JUDG. x.-xii.

Though the daughters of Salem lament,
Be the judge and the hero unbent ;
I have won the great battle for thee,
And my father and country are free.

When this blood of thy giving has gushed,
When the voice that thou lovest is hushed,
Let my memory still be thy pride,
And forget not I smiled as I died.

Moreover, it is written that my race
Hewed Ammon hip and thigh from Aroer
On Arnon unto Minnith.

Abimelech was neither judge nor deliverer. His is a bit of profane, rather than sacred, history, and has no interest for us beyond its connection with Gideon, and the light it throws on the condition of Central Palestine before the Hebrew ascendancy there had been completely established.

Tola.—Tola, of whose career we have no details, came as a deliverer, most probably from some North Canaanite oppressor of the type of Jabin, for he was of the tribe of Issachar, a tribe which never seems to have been roused into action except when the tyranny was close at hand. If so, like Deborah, who also may have been of the tribe, he moved southwards, to fix his seat of judgment at Shamir in Mount Ephraim,—not Samaria, though perhaps in its neighbourhood,—where, after twenty-three years of power, he was buried. His father's and grandfather's names are given—Puah and Dodo.

Jair.—The name of Jair takes us across the Jordan, where it had long before this a historic importance. Twenty-two years of rule are assigned to this Gileadite chief, of whom no exploits are recorded, unless he be the hero who conquered the Leja. The conquest of this region, though told in Numbers, may really belong to the period of the Judges (Num. xxxii. 39-41).

Renewal of Religious Degeneracy and Foreign Oppression.—The eastern tribes were, however, to furnish a warrior of whom fame would not be silent. A period of religious decline had set in, so dark that the pious historian looks back upon it

with horror, and treats it as a time of despair. Not into one idolatry, but into seven did Israel lapse. *And the children of Israel again did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, and served the Baalim, and the Ashtaroth, and the gods of Syria, and the gods of Zidon, and the gods of Moab, and the gods of the children of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines.* And Nemesis came in the shape of oppression from the Philistines on the west, and from Ammon on the east, the latter people apparently holding down the Transjordanic tribes in hopeless servitude, while they also made incursions to the other side. Their old allies, the Amalekites, appear to have been with them again, and another tribe, the Maonites, for whom, guided by recently deciphered Arabian inscriptions, we may, with the Greek translators, substitute *Midian*. And in the north-west the Phœnician power began to make itself felt. If the attacks were combined, the situation might well seem hopeless, and lead to the feeling expressed in the verse in which the God of Israel, as though wearied out by the perversity of such a people, meets their cry of agony thus: *Ye have forsaken Me, and served other gods: Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen; let them save you in the time of your distress.* But that better spirit which never really quite deserted this people returned. *And the children of Israel said unto Jehovah, We have sinned: do Thou unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto Thee; only deliver us, we pray Thee, this day. And they put away the strange gods from among them, and served Jehovah: and His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel.*

Ammon and the Transjordanic Tribes.—But the greatest stress of the trouble lay upon the Transjordanic part of Israel. Ammon seems to have made a determined attempt to recover the territory that had been wrested from it by Sihon, and had, on his overthrow, passed to the Hebrews. This appears from the interesting record, here preserved, of the demand made on Jephthah, and his reply, in which he urges, first, the Divine right of conquest, and, secondly, the right of possession.

Jephthah the Outlaw.—This man, who was to become the deliverer of Gilead, appears before us at first as a wild, lawless freebooter. The irregularity of his birth had deprived him not only of his family inheritance, but also of his rights in Gilead. He became an outlaw, and retired, with a band of desperadoes, to the land of Tob, probably the Leja, that curious lava

district which to this day offers fastnesses for brigands. His prowess and that of his band of outlaws soon became famous, and in their extremity the Gileadite sheiks appealed to him for help against Ammon, promising him not only restitution of his rights, but entire sovereignty. The name Gilead is often used for the whole territory occupied by Israel east of the Jordan, as Canaan for their western possessions. It is divided by the Jabbok (*Zerka*) into two parts, the northern of which is now called Jebel-Ajlûn; the southern, which is the scene of Jephthah's story, the Belkâ.

His Vow, and Victory over Ammon.—Jephthah worshipped Jehovah, but his conception of Him was degraded. Human sacrifice was in all ancient national religions the last resort to obtain the Divine favour. We recall Idomeneus and his son, and Agamemnon and Iphigenia. Moab, Ammon, Phœnicia, practised the horrid rite. And in vain did the better spirits of Hebraism, even long after this, protest against it. Jephthah vowed, in return for success, to offer as a burnt-offering the first person who should come out of his house to meet him on his return. Alas! it was his loved daughter, his only child. *And he smote them from Aroer until thou come to Minnith, even twenty cities, and unto "The meadow of vineyards," with a very great slaughter. So the children of Ammon were subdued before the children of Israel. And Jephthah came to Mizpah unto his house, and, behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances: and she was his only child; beside her he had neither son nor daughter.*

Death of Jephthah's Daughter.—The admiration of the heroism of father and daughter struggles for mastery in the historian with indignation at the dreadful deed. We see the conqueror overwhelmed by the natural grief of a father. *Alas, my daughter! thou hast brought me very low.* She rises at once to the grandeur of the situation, as the instrument whereby the victory had been won. If the fatal words had escaped his lips, she is content to die. It does not occur to either of them that the *kerem* might be avoided, as in the case of Isaac, by a substitution, still less that the dreadful vow was a far worse sin than a violation of it would be. Theology had a long growth before it ere it could rise to sentiments so true. The spirit of Jehovah had come upon Jephthah to inspire him for the fight, but it left him a prey to the gross notions of his age.

While we feel the deep pathos of the story, we must not be blind to the "fierce superstition across which it plays like a sun-beam on a stormy sea."¹

My words leapt forth: "Heaven heads the count of crime
With that wild oath." She render'd answer high:
"Not so, nor once alone; a thousand times
I would be born and die.

"Single I grew, like some green plant whose root
Creeps to the garden water-pipes beneath,
Feeding the flower; but ere my flower to fruit
Changed, I was ripe for death.

"My God, my land, my father—these did move
Me from my bliss of life, that Nature gave,
Lower'd softly, with a threefold cord of love,
Down to a silent grave.

"And I went mourning, 'No fair Hebrew boy
Shall smile away my maiden blame among
The Hebrew mothers'—emptied of all joy,
Leaving the dance and song,

"Leaving the olive gardens far below,
Leaving the promise of my bridal bower,
The valleys of grape-loaded vines that glow
Beneath the battled tower.

"When the next moon was roll'd into the sky,
Strength came to me that equal'd my desire.
How beautiful a thing it was to die
For God and for my sire!"

Jephthah and the Ephraimites.—When the war which had such a tragic close was beginning, the Gileadite Hebrews had naturally appealed for help to their powerful western brethren of Ephraim. They had refused, and had coupled their refusal with an insulting message, which, probably from some corruption of the text, is unintelligible to us. *Ye are fugitives of Ephraim, ye Gileadites, in the midst of Ephraim, and in the midst of Manasseh.* But when victory was achieved the insolent tribe changed its tone, and threatened vengeance on Jephthah for not asking for its alliance. Its warriors even crossed the Jordan to Zaphon in the Ghor, prepared to execute the threat. But they were met by the victorious Gileadites

¹ Stanley, *Jewish Church*, Lect. XVI. vol. i. 360.

and beaten ; and the fords were seized, to cut off their retreat. Single fugitives tried to cross, but were put to a test which has furnished the world with a proverb. *Art thou an Ephraimite ? If he said, Nay ; then said they unto him, Say now Shibboleth ; and he said Sibboleth ; for he could not frame to pronounce it right ; then they laid hold on him, and slew him at the fords of Jordan.* So in the Sicilian Vespers, March 31, 1282, the French were made to betray themselves by their pronounciation of *ceci e ciceri*. Those who said, as in French, *sesi e siseri* were cut down on the spot. When the revolt against the French in Flanders broke out, May 25, 1302, the gates were seized, and no one allowed to pass who could not say *scilt ende friend*.¹

Jephthah judged Israel six years. The text says he was buried *in the cities* of Gilead. Probably we should read *at Ahry* of Gilead, a village in the Hauran.

LII. CLOSE OF THE PERIOD OF JUDGES

JUDG. xiii.-xvi ; RUTH.

All is best, though we oft doubt
 What the Unsearchable dispose
 Of Highest Wisdom brings about,
 And ever best found in the close.

Origin of the Philistines.—The appearance of the Philistines as foes of Israel marks a stage in the history of the chosen people, for their hostility, though intermittent, continued to cause trouble till as late as the reign of Hezekiah. This strange race, whose origin is still involved in obscurity, had certainly at one time a temporary home in the delta of the Nile. Thither they had migrated from Caphtor, and Caphtor is generally supposed to have been Crete. But whether they came of the Pelasgic stock, or were one of the Semitic tribes who appear to have colonised Crete, is not yet cleared up. In the patriarchal age they had already begun to move northwards, and had reached as far as Gaza. By the time the period of Judges was drawing to a close they had dispossessed, and coalesced with, the Avim, who originally inhabited the

¹ *Palestine Exploration Fund Statement*, April 1895.

maritime plain and the Shephelah, and had made themselves secure masters of the cities which command the landward route from Egypt to the East. These cities, five in number,—Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Gath, Ekron, to which, perhaps, Jamnia ought to be added,—were bound together by a league, and acted together in foreign matters. For internal affairs each town had its *sar*, or prince. These were known as *the lords of the Philistines*.

Their Religion.—Their religion was of the Phœnician type. They worshipped a male and female deity, Dagon and Derceto. One of the Baalim also, Baal-zebub (he of flies), was greatly revered among them.

Their Commerce.—Philistine commerce appears to have been extensive, and great progress had been made in such arts and industries as were possible at that age; but, notwithstanding, they were regarded by their neighbours as a dull and stupid nation, so that *Philistine* became a term of ridicule as well as of reproach.

They oppress the Israelites—Chronological Difficulties.—This people are recorded to have oppressed Israel for forty-nine years, but there is no indication that their tyranny was felt beyond their own immediate neighbourhood.

They made, we can easily believe, frequent incursions into the territories of Dan and Judah. The Wady-es-Surar, or vale of Sorek, into which the railway from Jaffa to Jerusalem strikes, offered a short and easy route from Ekron, Jamnia, and perhaps Ashdod. The chronology of the Book of Judges is so uncertain that we do not know at what precise period to place the adventures of Samson—whether before or after the migration of his tribe northwards; but, whenever they occurred, the Philistines had already become the inveterate foes of the Hebrew settlers in and close to the Shephelah. Zorah and Eshtaol, towns clinging to the northern slopes which form the basin into which the vale of Sorek opens, would naturally be exposed to their attacks, which were so repeated and continuous that a permanent camp, Mahaneh-Dan, had been established in the neighbourhood.

Character and Exploits of Samson.—The adventures of Samson differ in a marked degree from the exploits of the judges whose history precedes them. He heads no rising, gathers no army. He is a solitary hero, endowed with pro-

digious strength, which was regarded as supernatural and dependent on the Nazirite vow, and it was in his own quarrel, and single-handed, that he made havoc among the Philistines. If to himself his gift seems expressly given him to annoy them, he does not on any occasion attack these foes as the champion and deliverer of Israel; and even in his prayer for renewal of strength, when blind and *making sport* for those to whom a woman and his own weakness had betrayed him, he thinks only of *being avenged on the Philistines for his two eyes*. Is it only a religious afterthought that can give this impetuous, frolicsome giant, full of the pranks as well as the strength of a giant, a place in serious history, or treat the feats which were the sequel of lawless amours as victories won to effect a deliverance which was indeed predicted, but has not been recorded?

Promise was that I
Should Israel from Philistia's yoke deliver;
Ask for this great deliverer now, and find him
Eyeless at Gaza in the mill with slaves,
Himself in bonds under Philistia's yoke;
Yet stay, let me not rashly call in doubt
Divine prediction.

No! The irregularities of Samson's life must not make us overlook the great lesson: that a lifelong consecration of the best that is in a man, and faith that can triumph even in death, are always noble, always religious; and while we cannot deny that the exploits of Samson come to us as tales from a story-loving race, moving us to laughter as often as to serious thought, yet, were it only that they give us a glimpse of a side of old Israelite life and character which is rarely represented, they fall into their place in a history of a people preserved often in strange ways, and prepared by strange methods, for a Divine purpose in the world.

Birth and early Adventures.—Promised by a heavenly messenger to his mother, wife of *a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah*, the child was a devotee from his birth; and as he grew, *Jehovah blessed him. And the spirit of Jehovah began to move him in Mahaneh-dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol.*

His first adventure arose out of his marriage to a woman of Timnath. He rent a lion on his way to the wedding, and

propounded to his thirty guests a riddle, which they certainly had no chance of guessing *if they had not plowed with his heifer*. To pay the forfeit he made a raid on Ashkelon, *and smote thirty men of them, and took their spoil*. When his anger had cooled, he returned to find his betrothed given to another. He avenged himself by letting loose foxes with firebrands tied to their tails among the cornfields of Timnath. The Philistines burnt the woman and her father as the authors of this mischief. Samson, after retaliating, took refuge in a rocky fastness of Judah, but was handed over to his foes by the men of that tribe, bound with ropes, which the hero easily broke, and with an ass's jawbone slew a thousand Philistines.

Another amour leads to the humorous exploit of carrying away the gates of Gaza.

Delilah.—But it was in the vale of Sorek that the woman dwelt who was to bring shame and ruin on Samson. Delilah succeeded, after three vain attempts, in wheedling his secret from him.

With blandish'd parlies, feminine assaults,
Tongue-batteries, she surceased not day nor night
To storm me, overwatch'd and wearied out.

Samson enslaved.—When his locks were shorn his strength went from him, and the Philistines easily mastered him, put out his eyes, and set him to slavish tasks. But as his hair grew again his strength returned; and when the Philistines, at a great festival of their god, Dagon, called for Samson to *make them sport*, they called for their own destruction.

His Death and Revenge.—*And Samson said unto the lad that held him by the hand, Suffer me that I may feel the pillars whereupon the house resteth, that I may lean upon them. Now the house was full of men and women; and all the lords of the Philistines were there; and there were upon the roof about three thousand men and women, that beheld while Samson made sport.*

One short prayer, one fearful resolve to find death in vengeance, and

straining all his nerves he bow'd,
As with the force of winds and waters pent,
When mountains tremble, the two massy pillars
With horrible convulsion to and fro,
He tugg'd, he shook, till down they came and drew
The whole roof after them, with burst of thunder,

Upon the heads of all who sat beneath—
 Lords, ladies, captains, counsellors, or priests,
 Their choice nobility and flower. . . .

Samson, with these unmix'd, inevitably
 Pull'd down the same destruction on himself.

Twenty years of judgeship are allotted to this Danite hero.

The Story of Ruth.—At what precise epoch the story of Ruth must be dated we do not know. In all the ancient editions of the Hebrew Scriptures it is joined to the Book of Judges. It is a story too exquisite to be told in any but Scripture language; and after all the scenes of violence and bloodshed which fill this part of the sacred narrative, it comes in its simple repose like a restful pause. ¹“It is one of those quiet corners of history which are the green spots of all time, and which appear to become greener and greener as they recede into the distance. Bethlehem is the starting-point of this story, as of the two which precede it and close the Book of Judges, but now under different auspices. We see amidst the cornfields, whence it derives its name, ‘The House of Bread,’ the beautiful stranger gleaning the ears of corn after the reapers. We hear the exchange of salutations between the reapers and their master, *Jehovah be with you; Jehovah bless thee.* We are present at the details of the ancient custom which the author of the book describes, almost with the fond regret of modern antiquarianism, as one which was *the custom in former times in Israel*: the symbolical transference of the rights of kinship by drawing off the sandals. We have the first record of a solemn nuptial benediction, with the first direct allusion to the ancient patriarchal tradition of Rachel and Leah, of Judah and Tamar. And whilst these touches send us back, as in the two dark stories which precede this tranquil episode, to the earlier stage of Israelitish history, there is in this the first germ of the future hope of the nation.”

Its Significance. — “The Book of Ruth is indeed the link of connection between the old and the new. There was rejoicing over the birth of the child at Bethlehem which Ruth bare to Boaz. *And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it.* It would seem as if there was already a kind of joyous foretaste of the birth and infancy which in

¹ Stanley, *Jewish Church*, Lect. XIII. vol. i. 304, 305.

after times was to be for ever associated with the name of Bethlehem. It is the first appearance on the scene of what may, by anticipation, be called even then the Holy Family, for that child was Obed the father of Jesse, the father of David. The story of Ruth has shed a peaceful light over what else would be the accursed race of Moab. We strain our gaze to know something of the long line of the purple hills of Moab, which form the background at once of the history and of the geography of Palestine. It is a satisfaction to feel that there is one tender association which unites them with the familiar history and scenery of Judæa: that from their recesses across the deep gulf which separates the two regions came the gentle ancestress of David and of the Messiah."

The Period of the Judges—Political Development.—All periods of history are really transition periods, but there are certain epochs which, on looking back, we see to have been more than usually momentous with change. Such, in the history of Israel, is that of the Judges. Entrance into a land of their own had produced a transformation in the mode of living of the Hebrews. The exchange of the tent for the house introduced settled habits. The wandering cattle-owner became a peasant and a farmer. And, producing more than he required himself of corn and wine, he became also a trader, and his relation with other peoples took a new form.

With the nomadic life went also much of the old tribal polity. The cities that grew up adopted forms of government for themselves. In the place of a single *sheik* we find a ruling body composed of the elders or nobility of the district or town, presided over by a city magistrate (*sar ha-'ir*).

Gleams of Hebrew Literature.—Whether this age saw the dawn of art and literature is more or less matter of conjecture. It is certain that Israel entered a country in comparison with itself highly civilised, and active trade relations would soon make it benefit by the industries of Phœnicia.

We are told (Judg. viii. 14, R.V. marg.) that Gideon had written down for him by a young man of Succoth, casually picked up, seventy-seven names of great people in that town. In what script was this list copied?

If the incident indicates a general spread of the art of writing, an alphabetical system—the letters of the Moabite Stone—must

have been already in use, and Hebrew literature had found its instrument.

Religious Backslidings.—In regard to religion, we see that the only declension from Jehovah worship on a great scale was towards Baalism. But *Baal* was a term which might quite correctly be applied to the Lord of Israel, and the attitude of the time was not so much apostasy as a want of distinction between the Baal of Canaan and the Baal of Israel.¹ But this want of distinction had fatal consequences, for the Israelites did not shrink from appropriating to their own cult the *Bamôth*, or “high places,” the *Maccebôth*, or pillars, and the *Asherôth*, or poles, which they found raised in the land. Nay, more, we find Gideon at Ophrah following the Canaanitish custom of erecting an image to the Deity covered with precious metal. This was indeed apostasy from the pure ideal of Moses.

General View of the Period.—But it would not be correct to impute to the people as a whole the defection which the narrative does not hesitate to attribute to sections of it. When a great crisis occurred, a prophetess or a warrior could confidently appeal to a religious sentiment which was both general and real. In Deborah’s Song, an unquestioned product of the time, Jehovah is Israel’s God, and Israel Jehovah’s people. Much had to be learnt, still more to be reduced to practice, before this belief could manifest itself in outward details, either of religion or morality. *In those days there was no king in Israel, and every man did that which was right in his own eyes.* This is the excuse, four times repeated (Judg. xvii. 6, xviii. 1, xix. 1, xxi. 25), which the historian, looking back from more settled times, makes for the lapses into superstition or barbarism so frequent in the period of the Judges. Yet amid all the lawlessness a silent preparation for national unity and national greatness was in progress. A time was gradually drawing on when there would be a king. *Judah and Israel would dwell safely, every man under his vine and under his fig-tree, from Dan even to Beersheba* (1 Kings iv. 25). In like manner a purer and larger faith was to emerge from the chaos of ideas amid which a Gideon or a Jephthah tried to reconcile what was *right in his own eyes* with what he supposed right in the eyes of the God who was gradually becoming known as the national God, and would in the future be known as the universal God.

¹ Kittel, *History of the Hebrews*, bk. ii. ch. i.

There was no common sanctuary in the period of the Judges, and we hear of priests only to the tribe of Dan ; but religion resisted all efforts to make it tribal.

But in other departments of life the tribal feeling prevailed. In his true ideal, no doubt, the Judge was not only a military deliverer, but an administrator of Divine law and order throughout the land. But his influence was mainly personal ; and except in the general phrase, *judged Israel*, we find no allusion to a common law. There is no recorded instance of actual jurisdiction to show how far his authority extended beyond a judge's own tribe. That there should be *one tribe lacking in Israel* was indeed matter of general concern, and some deeds were regarded as an outrage on society as a whole ; but inter-tribal jealousy was always ready to break out into violence, and what there was of gentle manners and friendly feeling found its exercise only within the clan.

In the eyes of the compiler of the Book of Judges, the period covered by them vindicated two great truths of theology, for its general purport is to present Jehovah as a God of justice and of mercy. It is true these Divine attributes do not take cognisance of individual crimes. They are concerned only with national sins. But these sins never escape retribution, and the retribution is always educational, not vindictive. The punishment falls, but on repentance it is removed. *And the children of Israel did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord. Therefore the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and He sold them into the hands of an enemy. But when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, the Lord raised them up a saviour.* This is the recurrent formula that gives the key to the book.

LIIL. SAMUEL AND ELI

1 SAM. i.-iii.

The silence often of pure innocence
Persuades, when speaking fails.

Chronology.—The period of the history of Israel just closed has no precise chronology. It is about 1100 B.C. that we commence to catch a glimpse of a series of facts which hence-

forward arrange themselves under dates that are more than conjectural. And what has now to be told must have happened during the half-century preceding that date.

Locality of Shiloh.—We are also able, with a precision before impossible, to place ourselves in the very centre of the events to be described. The scene is Shiloh, a place which the editor of Judges (xxi. 19) locates with great accuracy *on the north of Bethel, on the east side of the highway that goeth up from Bethel to Shechem, and on the south of Lebonah*. The ruins of a modern village, occupying a tell or mound, still preserve the old name. Seilun is ten miles north of Bethel, a little to the east of the great north road from Jerusalem to Nablus (Shechem), and from it the Wady-el-Lubban will lead the traveller, in a north-west direction, in about an hour to the village of Lubban or Lebonah. Of the size and appearance of the ancient Shiloh we can only conjecture; but there is a rocky platform on the hillside, north of the modern village, which may well have been the scene of one of the most memorable events in biblical history.

The Sanctuary at Shiloh.—On that platform, in all likelihood, stood the Sanctuary, the Temple as it is called; and the jealousy with which later mention speaks of Shiloh seems to indicate that an effort had been made not only to give the Tabernacle, or Tent of Meeting, a more substantial and permanent form than it had borne in the wanderings by structural additions, but also to anticipate something of the centralisation which afterwards belonged to Jerusalem. What is certain is that this, of all the sacred places, could claim to have preserved the traditions of the time of Moses in their greatest purity. Here is no trace of image, or pillar, or Asherah, no suggestion of Baal worship. The ark was here, and a Levitical priesthood able to trace itself back to the Exodus. The *quasi* temple at Shiloh had a gateway, with a throne or seat inside the door posts or pillars which formed the entrance. Here sat on days of religious or political solemnity the priest, Eli.

Eli, Priest and Judge.—He is presented to us abruptly already advanced in years, and it is recorded that *he judged Israel forty years*. Yet there is no mention of any deed of prowess or act of deliverance which might have rallied to him the devotion of the clans. He may have been warrior as well as priest, like Phinehas, after whom he had named

one of his own sons, though he was of the house, not of Eleazar, but of Ithamar, the fourth son of Aaron. But the silence of the narrative on this point gives additional significance to the union of the civil with the sacerdotal office. Already the need of more stability in the central power was felt, and as yet the religious bond in Israel was both wider and stronger than the political. The *king* was yet to be, but it looked as if the *priest* might succeed in uniting all the tribes and making a nation of them.

The Birth of Samuel.—On one solemn occasion, the yearly Bower or Tabernacle Feast, which corresponded with the festival of vintage, the old man was sitting in his accustomed place. Amid the worshippers he observed a woman whose lips moved, but in silent prayer. *Therefore Eli thought she had been drunken. And Eli said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken? Put away thy wine from thee.* But Hannah, or Anna,—a Phœnician name, which now first appears in sacred story,—had drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but had poured out her soul before the Lord, praying that she might have a son, and dedicating him as a Nazirite to the service of Jehovah. The prayer was granted and a son was born, and, as soon as weaned, that is, in his third year, was brought to the sanctuary. That boy was Samuel, a name variously explained as meaning “asked of God,” “heard of God,” but more correctly “name of God.” And the shame of childlessness was removed from Hannah, and her rival-wife (adversary) Peninnah, could no longer jibe at her when, as being alone, she only received one portion instead of many from her husband, Elkanah, *the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Toku, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite.* The song of praise and triumph which is attributed to her became the model of the *Magnificat*.

His Childhood.—While still a child, Samuel was vested in the linen ephod, which was worn by priests and others engaged in religious rites. And every year his parents came to the feast, and brought a little coat. And Eli had a kindly word and blessing for them when they came.

Hophni and Phinehas.—It was amid sad surroundings that the child was growing in favour *both with Jehovah and also with men.* For the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, both priests, and apparently hoping to succeed to all their father’s power, were depraved men, worthless characters,—sons of Belial,—“true

exemplars of the grasping and worldly clergy of all ages." Their immorality and greed became so notorious that they brought Shiloh into disrepute. *Men abhorred the offering of Jehovah.* And Eli was weak as well as very old, and could not, if he wished, restrain them. Indeed, he was even now looking fearfully for a violent end to his house, foretold by a nameless prophet; and the doom was once more announced in a way which showed that the thunders, lightnings, the oracular warnings of the older period were about to be superseded by a "still small voice." The historian, writing probably from a time of great prophetic activity, especially notices that at this time Divine communications were rare, and visions were not spread abroad or frequent.

¹ "It was night in the sanctuary. As afterwards in the great Temple, so now, the high priest slept in one of the adjacent chambers, and attendant ministers in another. In the centre, on the left of the entrance, stood the seven-branched candlestick, superseded in the reign of Solomon by the ten separate sconces, but revived after the Captivity by the one candlestick with seven branches, as it is still seen on the Arch of Titus. It was the only light of the Tabernacle during the night, was solemnly lighted every evening, as in the devotions of the Eastern world, both Mussulman and Christian, and extinguished just before morning, when the doors were opened."

Samuel's Vision.—In the deep silence of the early morning, before the sun had risen, when the sacred lamp was still burning, the child Samuel heard a mysterious call. *The LORD called Samuel: and he answered, Here am I. And he ran to Eli, and said, Here I am; for thou calledst me. And he said, I called not; lie down again.* Thrice the strange summons came, and thrice the child lay down again, till Eli, perceiving that it was of the Lord, bade him reply, *Speak, LORD; for Thy servant heareth.* Then, in an awful message, more awful as sent through the lips of an innocent child, came the doom of the house of Ithamar.

The Doom of the House of Eli.—*And the LORD said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle. In that day I will perform against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from the beginning even unto the end.*

The unknown prophet had predicted in detail the successive

¹ Stanley, *Jewish Church*, Lect. XVII. vol. i. 380.

blows that were to fall: the death of his posterity *in the flower of their age*—*there shall not be an old man in thine house for ever*—loss of the priesthood—beggary of the few survivors of the family—and, as signs of the more protracted doom, the death in one day of both his sons.

For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever, for the iniquity which he knew, because his sons did bring a curse upon themselves, and he restrained them not. And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever.

LIV. THE ARK OF THE LORD

1 SAM. iv.-vii.

He delivered His strength into captivity,
And His glory into the enemy's hand.

Victory of the Philistines.—The doom did not delay. The Philistines, if their power had for a time been broken by Samson, had recovered, and were prepared for more than mere skirmishes on their frontier. It is at present so impossible to accept any proposed identifications of Aphek and Eben-ezer that we are in the dark as to their plan of campaign. But it is plain that they intended to make themselves masters of Mount Ephraim, and possibly of the whole chain of hills separating the maritime plain from the plain of Jezreel; and the tribes of Israel that were most closely concerned seem in this moment of danger to have combined to form a considerable army. But it wanted a leader, and was defeated with a loss of four thousand men.

The Ark sent for.—Now the Philistines were in the habit of carrying images into the field of battle. Superstition is infectious, and it was a superstitious age. The elders attributed their defeat to the absence of the ark. *Wherefore hath Jehovah smitten us to-day before the Philistines? Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of Jehovah out of Shiloh unto us, that it may come among us, and save us out of the hand of our enemies.* Messengers were sent, and Hophni and Phinehas, the priests, left their licentious luxury to conduct the sacred

chest with due solemnity to the camp, where it was welcomed with one of the appalling shouts for which the Israelite warriors were famed : *a great shout so that the earth rang again.* And the Philistines were roused to the last pitch of desperate courage to resist, as they thought, this new and Divine enemy.

Terror of the Philistines.—*And the Philistines were afraid, for they said, God is come into the camp. And they said, Woe unto us ! for there hath not been such a thing heretofore. Woe unto us ! Who shall deliver us out the hand of these mighty gods ? These are the gods that smote the Egyptians with all manner of plagues in the wilderness.* In the triumph song of Moses the Egyptian deliverance had been connected with Philistia. *Pangs have taken hold of the inhabitants of Philistia* (Ex. xv. 14).

Defeat of the Israelites.—It seemed to them to be about to be a fight between god and god. And the issue was tremendous. *Be strong, and quit yourselves like men, O ye Philistines, that ye be not servants unto the Hebrews, as they have been to you : quit yourselves like men, and fight. And the Philistines fought, and Israel was smitten, and they fled every man to his tent : and there was a very great slaughter ; for there fell of Israel thirty thousand footmen. And the ark of God was taken ; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain.*

Death of Eli.—In the evening of the same day the disastrous news reached Shiloh. A young Benjamite—a Jewish tradition says it was Saul—with Bedawin speed presented himself with clothes torn and hair sprinkled with dust, Oriental signs of calamity. A loud wail, such as, on the announcement of any great calamity, runs through an Eastern city, rang through the streets,

A murmur long and loud,
And a cry of fear and wonder.

The aged priest was sitting in his usual place beside the gateway of the sanctuary. The cry reached him, and he asked the tidings. “Israel was beaten ; Hophni and Phinehas were killed ; the ark of God was taken.” The last announcement broke the old man’s heart. *He fell from off his seat backward by the side of the gate, and his neck brake, and he died : for he was an old man, and heavy. And he had judged Israel forty years.*

Birth of Ichabod.—The news spread and reached the house of Phinehas. The pangs of labour overtook the widow of the fallen priest, but not even the birth of a son could avert the effects of her grief. With her, as with her father-in-law, one thought absorbed her whole soul, and with her last breath she gave to the child a name which, whatever its true derivation, became from its sound a memorial of that awful hour. *Ichabod*—*Where is the glory?* that is, *The glory is departed from Israel, for the ark of God is taken.*¹

The Ark at Ashdod.—The ark was taken, but its captivity was not to be long. According to a custom, which the inscription of Mesha on the Moabite Stone shows was common, the Philistines placed it as a trophy in the temple of their god Dagon, at Ashdod. But twice the image of that deity—a fish with the head and hands of a man—fell to the ground, the second time with

head and hands lopped off,
In his own temple, on the grunsel edge,
Where he fell flat and shamed his worshippers.

Sufferings of the Philistines.—Moreover, Ashdod was afflicted with a plague of mice and tumours. Clearly it was not the place for the ark. A change of locality might destroy the evil influence. But calamity attended the sacred chest to Gath. Another change was suggested, but Ekron declined to run the risk; and, after a lapse of seven months, a council of priests and diviners was called to devise means to avert the evil. The proposal to send back the ark to the Hebrews was unanimously accepted, the diviners stipulating that, according to Oriental custom, one which has prevailed in India from time immemorial, a present should be sent to the Power that had inflicted the evil from which deliverance was sought. Accordingly, ten golden emblems of the plagues from which the Philistines had suffered were made, and placed with the ark on a new cart, to which two milch kine were harnessed.

Restoration of the Ark.—In the borderland of the two territories, under the hills of Dan, the villagers of Beth-shemesh were at their harvest round their village, high up on the southern bank of the vale of Sorek. Suddenly they saw a strange procession winding through the vale. It was the cart

¹ Stanley, *Jewish Church*, Lect. XVII. vol. i. 381, 382.

conveying the sacred relic, followed by the Philistine princes. The cows lowed as they went; and the people *lifted up their eyes, and saw the ark, and rejoiced to see it*. The great stone on which the cart and cows were sacrificed was long pointed out as a memorial of the event. But a sad calamity occurred to overcloud the joy. We have but a dim and doubtful glimpse of its nature, for the text is here manifestly corrupt, and appears, indeed, to be due to a late interpretation of a confused tradition. *And He smote of the men of Beth-shemesh, because they had looked into the ark of Jehovah, even He smote of the people seventy men, and fifty thousand men*. The Greek version makes this huge slaughter to have taken place among the sons of one Jeconiah, because they had not shared in the general joy with which the ark was welcomed. Exactly what occurred must be left to conjecture; but it led to the removal of the sacred chest to Kirjath-jearim, a place somewhat to the east of Beth-shemesh, where it remained in *the house of Abinadab in the hill*, whose son Eleazar was *sanctified to keep it*, till it was brought by David to Jerusalem.

The Fate of Shiloh.—The fact that it was not carried back to Shiloh is significant. The fate of that place is shrouded in darkness. But whatever it was, it profoundly impressed the imagination of after times, for we find it used by Jeremiah (vii. 12, xxvi. 6) as a type of destruction and desolation. *Then will I make this house like Shiloh, and will make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth. Go ye now unto My place which was in Shiloh . . . and see what I did to it for the wickedness of My people Israel*. It was probably reduced to the mere unimportant village which now, as Seilun, occupies its site. Ahijah the prophet, who predicted the rise of Jeroboam, was a Shilonite, and pilgrims from Shiloh are mentioned in Jeremiah, so that it certainly continued to be inhabited. But its glory, derived from the presence of the sanctuary, which, being a tent, was probably hurried away, had departed with it. A late Psalmist sings—

He forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh,

The tent which he placed among men (Ps. lxxviii. 60).

It is not again connected with Samuel, who took the place and office of priest. And in spite of the dear and sacred associations of his early days, that prophet, to whom such ties were strong, as we see by his settling down at Ramah, his birth-

place, did not include Shiloh in the circuit of sanctuaries which he officially visited.

IV. PROPHET AND KING

1 SAM. vii., viii., xii.

The old order changes, yielding place to new,
And God fulfils Himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.

Samuel and the Religious Revival.—The ark had been at Baalab, or Kirjath-jearim, under the charge of Eleazar, son of Abinadab, twenty years when Samuel's personality first asserts itself. These were years of Philistine domination and oppression. With the destruction of the religious centre, religion itself not unnaturally declined, and idolatry spread. Still, an expression of the historian, if the text may be trusted, shows that the oppressed people still looked to Jehovah for deliverance. Such at least would be the hope of those brought into immediate contact with Samuel. *And all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD.* Samuel doubtless watched till his opportunity was come, and the nation was prepared for reform, when he called a council at Mizpah (or "Watchtower"), either what was afterwards called by the same name, *Scopus*, a ridge north of Jerusalem, or the height known as Neby-Samwil. The latter, rising more than 3000 feet above the sea, was an excellent spot for the federal diets, which became necessary and frequent when Israel commenced to unite and organise itself. The spot, wherever it was, has been called the Washington of the Israelite federation. There now, with libations and fasting, what amounted to a renewal of the Covenant was made, the Baalim and the Ashtaroth were renounced, and Samuel, a prayerful son of a prayerful mother, interceded for the people.

Defeat of the Philistines.—The council appears to have been still in session when the Philistines, in whom it had excited suspicion, collected a force for attack. In a panic, the people surrounded Samuel, begging once more for his intercession; and while the sacrifice which he offered was on the altar, the battle began, which resulted in a total defeat of the Philistine army on the very spot, between Mizpah and a

crag called *Shen* (or "Tooth"), where they had before been victorious. The Stone of Help, *Eben-ezer*, was erected to commemorate this deliverance.

Samuel's Judgeship.—Our narrative here takes the form of a brief summary of Samuel's official life as judge, of which it speaks as *all the days of Samuel*. The Philistine power had been so broken that during this period they did not molest Israel. The Amorites, too, left them in peace. Samuel's organisation must have been thorough, extending through civil and religious life. He had a regular circuit of places where he held his court.

The Schools of the Prophets.—He established schools, or guilds, of prophets—seminaries, apparently, where music, singing, and probably recitation, were taught. We are very much in the dark as to these students or candidates for prophecy. We shall presently meet a string of them descending a hill, preceded by pipes, and timbrels, and flutes, and harps, in a state of emotional excitement, which some who encounter them may find catching. They have been compared with the dervishes who parade the streets of Cairo, howling and chanting. The word prophecy used of them appears to mean, in the connection, only this excited musical utterance, and must not be confounded with the prophetic gift of prediction or grand moral teaching like that of Isaiah. One of these scholars might be called to this, no doubt; and the true *Nabi* was *called*, but not necessarily *trained*.

The Israelites ask for a King.—Samuel grew old in office, and he expected his sons to succeed him as judges; but they were unfit. The experiment made of Joel and Abijah, at Beersheba, was not a success—they took bribes. Finding the seat of judicial authority corrupt, the elders of Israel approached Samuel and demanded a king. Some change was necessary, and they considered it would be advantageous to adopt the form of government in practice around them, and be as other nations.

Samuel's Displeasure.—*But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, Give us a king to judge us.* If any personal feeling contributed to this displeasure, it is very pardonable in the man who, from his earliest infancy, had been the devoted servant of God and His people, who at the close of life could honestly plead, *Behold the king walketh before you, and I am old and grey-headed; and I have walked before you from my youth unto this day. Here I am: witness against me before*

Jehovah. No ox or ass had he taken from their stalls ; no bribe had he accepted, not even as much as a sandal. He might well have taken the demand for a king instead of a judge as a slur upon his own official career, which had been so blameless that he has been named the Jewish Aristides. Scripture gives just one hint at this. *And Samuel prayed unto the LORD. And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee : for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected Me, that I should not be king over them.* In estimating the attitude of Samuel we may remember that *Melek*, the Hebrew word for *king*, was the name of a heathen deity. Jehovah was Israel's *Melek*, and to adopt another looked like apostasy. And this terrible thought of disloyalty shown to the invisible King overpowered all other in the prophet's mind. This gave the shock he felt. For a whole night, Josephus tells us, he lay fasting and sleepless, in his concern and torment of mind.

The Change from Theocracy to Kingship.—Change, in this world of change, always implies loss as well as gain. The first period of Jewish history was ending. It had been a time of wandering and strife, of danger and deliverance ; and through it all, in spite of the many lapses into gross idolatry, there had predominated one idea, at once religious and political, the idea of continual and direct dependence on the help of God alone. The Judges themselves were regarded as invested with something of a Divine or God-like character. A new selection of Judges is described as a *choosing of new gods*. Through them God has reigned, beyond them there had been no regular means of government. It is to this period that the term invented by Josephus—a strained expression, as he himself admits—the *theocracy* is generally applied. Monarchy was now to take its place. Would the true theocracy, the rule of God over the thoughts and actions of Israel, be weakened or strengthened by the contemplated changes ? That was the question which agitated Samuel. He would have been unfit to guide the nation through this crisis had he not so fully realised what was good in the past. He would have been still more unfit had he not been capable of receiving the revelation of what might be better in the future. He was a prophet, often not inaptly regarded as the first of the prophets in this, that he accepted the momentous change which he was to inaugurate as more hopeful than dangerous. He told the people, apparently

on the very morning after his anxious night of prayer, all that was to be feared from the tyranny of an Oriental despot, whose subjects are at his absolute disposal, and their property liable to arbitrary seizure. *But the people refused to hearken unto the voice of Samuel.* And seeing the change was inevitable, he accepted it, and surrounded it with all the ardour and hope of his own nature, not refusing to pray unto the Lord for them. And Samuel said unto the people, *Fear not: ye have done all this evil: yet turn not aside from following Jehovah, but serve Jehovah with all your heart; and turn ye not aside: for then should ye go after vain things which cannot profit nor deliver, for they are vain. For Jehovah will not forsake His people for His great name's sake: because it hath pleased Jehovah to make you a people unto Himself. Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against Jehovah in ceasing to pray for you: but I will instruct you in the good and the right way. Only fear Jehovah, and serve Him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things He hath done for you. But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king.*

The change was inevitable, and yet Israel's most glorious memories were against it. "Moses had made Israel a nation, and yet had not become king. Least of all could the experiences of the age of the Judges, to which Samuel appealed in his fine speech, give any encouragement. These showed how, behind such a monarchic constitution as ancient "Tyranny," there ever stood the danger of violence and despotism."¹

LVI. KING SAUL

1 SAM. ix.-xi.

Till lo, thou art grown to a monarch: a people is thine:
And all gifts, which the world offers singly, on one head combine!
On one head all the beauty and strength, love and rage (like the throe
That, awork in the rock, helps its labour and lets the gold go),
High ambition, and deeds which surpass it, fame crowning them,—all
Brought to blaze on the head of one creature—King Saul.

Among all the ancients strength and beauty were regarded as necessary kingly qualities. Ajax appears in Homer as

Towering o'er all, with head and shoulders broad;

¹ Kittel, *History of the Hebrews*, bk. ii. ch. ii.

and Turnus in Virgil

O'ertops the foremost chieftains by a head.

And if Israel was to have a king, he must be endowed with the qualities necessary for a warrior, a leader of men in battle. These Saul possessed in a pre-eminent degree.

Now there was a man of Benjamin, whose name was Kish . . . a mighty man of valour. . . . And he had a son, whose name was Saul, a young man and a goodly : and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he : from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people.

Three steps, so to speak, on the way to the throne are picturesquely described in the sacred narrative, or rather narratives, for there are two accounts of the foundation of the monarchy. The first and oldest account is comprised in the section ix. 1-x. 16. This tells how Saul was anointed king by Samuel, to defend Israel against the Philistines, and bidden "do as his hand may find" where occasion arises. The second account (to which chap. viii. is an introduction) occupies x. 17-27, and tells how Saul was chosen to be king by lot.

The lost Asses of Kish.—The first of these steps is the search for the missing asses, which introduced the future monarch to the prophet Samuel.

A drove of asses belonging to Kish had gone astray on the mountains. In quest of them—by pathways of which every stage is mentioned, only to baffle us in our inability to identify them—Saul wandered at his father's bidding, accompanied by a trusty servant, traditionally believed to have been Doeg the Edomite. After three days they arrived at a hill surmounted by a town, which was possibly Ramah. Saul was for giving up the quest, lest his father should become uneasy about him, but was deterred from returning by the advice of the servant, who proposed a consultation of the man of God as to the fate of the asses, securing his oracle by a present (*bakhshîsh*) of a quarter shekel, which he fortunately had with him. *Before-time in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, thus he said, Come, and let us go to the seer ; for he that is now called a prophet was beforetime called a seer.*

Reception at Ramah.—Help in the adventure comes, as so often in patriarchal story, from maidens going to draw water.

By their direction the seer is caught at the gate of the town. To their surprise, Saul and his servant find their coming expected, and a feast prepared as for a distinguished guest, for a Divine intimation had indicated to Samuel the approach and the future destiny of the youthful Benjamite. *As for thine asses (so spoke the seer) that were lost three days ago, set not thy mind on them; for they are found. And for whom is all that is desirable in Israel? Is it not for thee, and for all thy father's house?*

Saul anointed by Samuel.—Saul's reply, *Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin?* may partake of the exaggeration of Oriental etiquette, for Kish ben Abiel was regarded as a great personage; but none the less must the surprise at such a reception have been real; and when, after the night's entertainment, Samuel called him forth, and, bidding him send his servant on before, took a vial of oil and poured it on his head and kissed him, and said, *Is it not that the LORD hath anointed thee to be prince over His inheritance?* we may believe that, even without the signs which the prophet gave, and their fulfilment, Saul felt that a new destiny had been thrust upon him, and a new life begun, or, in the words of Scripture, *God had given him another heart*. On meeting a chain of prophets coming down from a height, he caught their enthusiasm, and the fresh ideas just arisen within him impelled him too into excited song, so that it became a proverb, *Is Saul also among the prophets?* Then, modestly concealing from his family what had taken place, he passed again into the quiet of domestic life.

The Election of the King.—But according to the later account, Samuel called all the people together to Mizpah, and there the second step was taken towards the throne—the public election of him who was afterwards to be known as *the chosen of Jehovah*. The people presented themselves by their tribes and by their thousands, i.e. their families, and by some process not described, but apparently a casting of lots, a selection was made. When the lot fell successively on the tribe, the family, and the person of Saul, he tried to escape the honour thus destined for him by hiding among the baggage. When at length he was discovered, his magnificent presence won instant admiration and acceptance, and the air resounded with the shout, *Let the king*

live, which, from the Genevan Bible, assumed the familiar form, *God save the king*.

Samuel's "Book."—*Then Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom, and wrote it in a book, and laid it up before Jehovah.* We regret the disappearance of the contents of this roll. Samuel had already sketched the *manner of a king*, i.e. the character or type of a king, and this may have been written down by him now and deposited by the ark as a record of his warning. On the other hand, the prophet may have drawn up a charter defining the position of the king in relation to Jehovah and to the people. Saul was attended to Gibeah by a band of men *whose hearts God had touched*. But some, described as sons of Belial, a common term of contempt,—Ephraimites, it may be,—held aloof. They despised the Benjamite, and brought him no presents. But he held his peace; and his time to answer their jibe, *How shall this man save us?* soon came.

Saul at Gibeah.—He had gone back to his home on the hill, from this time to be known not as Gibeah of Benjamin, but Gibeah of Saul. There we might fancy ourselves still in the days of Shamgar or Gideon, when we see him, an elected king, following his herd of oxen in the field, and driving them home at the close of day up the steep ascent.

The Deliverance of Jabesh.¹—"It was on one of these evening returns that his career received the next sharp stimulus which drove him on his destined work. A loud wail, such as goes up in an Eastern city at the tidings of some great calamity, strikes his ear. He asked, *What aileth the people, that they weep?* They told him the news that had reached them from their kinsmen beyond the Jordan. The work that Jephthah had wrought in that wild region had to be done over again. Ammon was advancing, and the first victims were the inhabitants of Jabesh, connected by the romantic adventure of the previous generation with the tribe of Benjamin. This one spark of outraged family feeling was needed to awaken the dormant spirit of the sluggish giant. He was a true Benjamite from first to last. *The spirit of God came upon him mightily*, as on Samson. His shy, retiring nature vanished. His anger flamed out; and he took two oxen from the herd which he was driving, and he hewed them in pieces, and sent their bones through the

¹ Stanley, *Jewish Church*, Lect. XXI. vol. ii. 11, 12.

country with the significant warning, *Whosoever cometh not forth after Saul, and after Samuel, so shall it be done unto his oxen.* An awe fell upon the people : they rose as one man. In one day they crossed the Jordan, and Jabesh was rescued."

Saul's Election ratified.—It was the deliverance of Jabesh-Gilead which thus seated Saul securely on the throne ; for his election was now ratified at a solemn gathering at Gilgal, where Samuel formally handed over to the new monarch the office of judge and leader, for which his recent exploit had proved him so fitted.

LVII. SAUL AND JONATHAN

1 SAM. xiii.-xv.

Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives.

They were swifter than eagles,

They were stronger than lions.

Chronological Difficulties.—Chap. xiii. of our narrative opens with a verse of a type common in the Books of the Kings, inserted apparently by a late editor to give Saul's age at his accession, and the length of his reign. But unhappily the first of the numbers was not inserted, or has dropt out, and it is a matter of difficulty, nay, impossibility, to ascertain what it should be. This deficiency throws doubt, also, on the correctness of the statement *reigned two years.* We do not know the number that should take the place of *two.* All that is clear is that the king's eldest son, Jonathan, was already a warrior of repute at the time of his father's accession.

The Family of Saul.—At the end of chap. xiv. there appears a summary of the reign of Saul which should be read here. There we learn that the name of Saul's legitimate wife was Ahinoam, and we gather that, besides JONATHAN, she bore him two sons, ISHUI and MELCHISHUA. Ishui may be the same as the Eshbaal or Ishbosheth of Chronicles. Or is he the Abinadab of chap. xxxi. 2? There were two daughters, MERAB and MICHAL, and a cousin, ABNER, who was to distinguish himself greatly as a captain. We see, too, the military bent of the

king: *And when Saul saw any mighty man or any valiant man, he took him unto him.*

His Mode of Life.—Saul had no capital properly so-called. He dwelt usually in Gibeah, and led a family life, without any show or ceremony,—the simple life of a rustic noble,—cultivating his own fields when he was not at war.¹ His house was large. At each new moon, sacrifices and feasts were celebrated there, at which all his officers had allotted places. The royal seat was against the wall. There were footmen to execute orders, similar to the Eastern *schaousch* of the present day. There was little resemblance to a court. We think rather of the headquarters of a military chief.

The Philistine Oppression continues.—In fact, the pressure of Philistine power made anything else impossible. The relief afforded by Samuel's victory at Ebenezer had been but temporary and partial. When Saul assumed the royal title the situation was deplorable. The Philistines occupied posts in the heart of the country,—at Geba for instance (now Jeba), a place in Saul's own tribe, and not far from Gibeah, with which it is sometimes, not unnaturally (both words meaning hill), confounded by the narratives. To make their condition more desperate, the people were unarmed. Only Saul and Jonathan had swords. It seems that the Philistines had so sternly prohibited the manufacture, and even the repair, of iron implements in Israel, that in order to sharpen those necessary for agriculture, application had to be made to them.

Formation of a Standing Army.—Thus the old militia of the country were useless, and Saul began to form the nucleus of a standing army. We have seen how he attached to his service those whom he saw to be stalwart and brave. In this way he collected three thousand men. How he armed them we are not told.

As his points of support he selected his own Gibeah, where he left Jonathan with a third of his force; Michmash, opposite Geba, on the other side of a ravine, now Wady Suweinit; and Bethel, at some distance to the north-west of the latter place.

Jonathan at Geba—Outbreak of War.—The first blow in the war of independence was struck by Jonathan. He attacked Geba, and either smote the garrison or destroyed a pillar, symbol of

¹ Renan, *History of the People of Israel*, ch. xv.

Philistine domination, according as we translate the Hebrew word *netsiv* in 1 Sam. xiii. 3. This was of course the signal for war. Scarcely had the news reached the Philistine headquarters when Saul's trumpets were heard blowing a defiance. If we follow the text which the Greek translators used, there went a cry through the Philistines, saying, *The slaves have revolted*, and they mustered their forces, a thousand chariots (the number in the text is evidently wrong), *six thousand horsemen, and people as the sand which is on the seashore in multitude*. Such a display of force was too overwhelming for an immediate stand against it. Almost a panic ensued. The Israelites went back to their hiding-places. Saul retreated from Bethel and Michmash, which was immediately occupied by the enemy, and, leaving Jonathan to cling to Gibeah, fell back on Gilgal, where Samuel had already appointed to meet him. On that old camping-ground he rallied a considerable force.

Saul assumes Priestly Functions.—But they soon began to desert. The direction given by Samuel, to wait seven days for his coming to Gilgal, narrated as a communication from the prophet at his first interview with him years before, probably belongs properly to this later time. Saul's better judgment induced him to wait; but as the seventh day drew to a close, his natural impatience asserted itself, and, to prevent the desertion of the remnant of his troops, he assumed the priestly office and offered a sacrifice, no unlawful thing in itself. But it was open rebellion against the Divine voice, speaking through the prophet, and draws down on him a signal condemnation. *And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which He commanded thee: for now would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever. But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought Him a man after His own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him to be captain over His people, because thou hast not kept that which the LORD hath commanded thee.*

It is the first recorded instance of what will frequently appear: a breach between prophetic inspiration on the one hand, and royal authority and sacerdotal forms on the other.

Ahijah, Saul's Priest.—Samuel went to Gibeah, where presently also we find Saul with six hundred men. No reconciliation, however, took place; and the king, in place of the

prophet, attached to his person Ahijah, a great-grandson of Eli the Ahimelech of 1 Sam. xxii. 9, or his brother.

Rout of the Philistines at Michmash.—Meantime the Philistines had been unusually active. Three bands of marauders sallied from their camp at Michmash, and proceeded north, west, and east to harry the country. Israel seemed utterly crushed beneath them. But Jonathan, a young hero whose strength and agility won him the surname of “Gazelle,” moved by patriotism and the spirit of adventure, conceived a daring deed. From his post at Gibeah, attended only by his faithful squire, he crossed the ravine and scaled one of the tooth-like cliffs that jutted out from Michmash, and, by the unexpected suddenness of his assault, threw the whole garrison into a panic, so that when Saul, seeing the commotion, brought up his six hundred warriors, a complete rout ensued; and, but for another outbreak of the king’s impatience, the Philistine power might have been utterly broken. For as the tide of battle rolled westward, the whole country rose, the Israelites flocking in from their hiding-places on all sides, slaughtering all who fell in their way.

Saul’s rash Vow.—It was still an age of rash vows, and Saul, in his furious haste for vengeance, had cursed any who should pause for a moment, even to taste food. Jonathan, ignorant of the vow, and faint from hunger and fatigue, refreshed himself, as he passed through a wood, with some wild honey. And moreover, when at length Ajalon was reached, the pursuing army fell madly on the oxen and sheep of that rich valley, and began to devour the flesh with the blood. Saul stopped this unlawful proceeding as soon as possible, but the mischief had been done; and when the oracle was asked if the pursuit might continue, no answer came.

Jonathan saved by the People.—Saul understood from this silence that someone had broken his vow. An inquiry fastened the guilt upon Jonathan, and the king, like Jephthah before him, prepared for the dreadful sacrifice of his child. But there was now a better and more intelligent spirit abroad in the nation at large. What was tolerated in the time of Jephthah, when every man *did what was right in his own eyes*, when the obligation of such vows overrode all other considerations, was no longer tolerated.¹ The people interposed in Jonathan’s behalf. They recognised the religious aspect of his great exploit. *And*

¹ Stanley, *Jewish Church*, Lect. XXI. vol. ii. 17, 18.

the people said unto Saul, Shall Jonathan die, who hath wrought this great salvation in Israel? God forbid: as the LORD liveth, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground; for he hath wrought with God this day. So the people rescued (or redeemed, possibly by an ox or other animal), Jonathan, that he died not. It was the dawn of a better day. "It was the national spirit, now in advance of their chief, animated with the same prophetic teaching, which through the voice of Samuel had now made itself felt: the conviction that there was a higher duty even than outward sacrifice or exact fulfilment of literal vows."

LVIII. REJECTION OF SAUL AND CHOICE OF A SUCCESSOR

1 SAM. XV.—XVI. 1-14.

Who swerves from innocence, who makes divorce
Of that serene companion—a good name,
Recovers not his loss; but walks with shame,
With doubt, with fear, and haply with remorse.

Parallel Narratives in the Old Testament—Saul's Victory over Amalek.—In the Bible we often find the same event told not only twice over by different narrators, but also from two points of view: the sacred and the profane, the religious and the secular. It was so with the migration of Abraham. It is so with the exploits of Saul. In the summary of his history at the close of chap. xiv. we read: *Now when Saul had taken the kingdom over Israel, he fought against all his enemies on every side, against Moab, and against the children of Ammon, and against Edom, and against the kings of Zobah, and against the Philistines: and whithersoever he turned himself, he vexed them. And he did valiantly, and smote the Amalekites, and delivered Israel out of the hands of them that spoiled them.* But this expedition against Amalek is told again in detail by one who saw its religious importance, and brought out Saul's conduct as it appeared to a prophet possessed with a far-reaching vision of past and future, which the king could not understand.

The Secular Account.—He had conquered Amalek and put an end to the danger of raids from this once powerful nomad tribe, ever from the first hanging on the skirts of Israel with

hostile intent, or making incursions into their land. Surely a signal service.

The Religious Account.—But he had spared their chief Agag and the best of the spoil, doubtless to make a more splendid show at the sacrificial thanksgiving; for Saul up to a certain point was zealous, not only for his people, but for his people's God. But Samuel had said: *Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.* It was another instance of the terrible *kerem*, which we, looking back from our Christian standpoint, can see perhaps to have been *necessary*, but which the best spirits of that and of far later times regarded also as *righteous*, as a Divine command. Saul himself must have so regarded it; and yet he disobeyed, and consequently brought upon him the sentence of rejection. *And Samuel said,*

Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices.

As in obeying the voice of the LORD?

Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,

And to hearken than the fat of rams.

For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft,

And stubbornness is as idolatry and teraphim.

Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD,

He hath also rejected thee from being king.

Breach between Saul and Samuel.—Saul showed signs of regret for his disobedience. We must not call it repentance, for there was nothing moral in it. He wanted to keep up his prestige. *I have sinned: yet honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel, and turn again with me, that I may worship Jehovah thy God.* Samuel acquiesced so far. Apparently the cattle that had been saved were sacrificed. *So Samuel turned again after Saul, and Saul worshipped Jehovah.* But Agag was hewn in pieces, and the rupture between king and prophet was not healed, though it was with mourning that he who had anointed Israel's first king left his side and went to find his successor at Bethlehem. He went in some trepidation. *If Saul hear it, he will kill me. And Jehovah said, Take an heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to Jehovah.*

The Family of Jesse at Bethlehem.—The sheik of the village was one Jesse, grandson of Boaz and Ruth the

Moabitess. He had eight sons, and lived a patriarchal life. If a sacrifice took place, he would naturally preside at the ceremony. It was not usual to call in the services of a priest. Samuel's visit, therefore, was so unexpected that the people of Bethlehem were alarmed as he approached driving before him a heifer. Reassured by the summons of their own chief man, they assembled, and the initiatory rite of purification took place.

Samuel seeks a Successor to Saul.—The heifer was killed. The party were waiting to begin the feast. Samuel stood ready to pour out the oil on the head of another chosen one, as he had poured it on the head of Saul. Naturally he looked for the same outward marks of kingly presence which had distinguished the first king; and such was Eliab, the eldest of Jesse's sons. But the Divine warning restrained him; *for man looketh on the outward appearance, but Jehovah looketh on the heart.* So Abinadab and Shammah and other four pass before the prophet in vain. *Are here all thy children?* said Samuel to Jesse. *And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep.*

The Boy David.¹—"This is our first introduction to the famous David. From the sheepfold on the hillside the boy was brought in. He took his place at the village feast, when, with a silent gesture, or perhaps with a secret whisper into his ear, the sacred oil was poured upon his head. We are enabled to fix his appearance at once in our minds. It is implied that he was of short stature. He had red or auburn hair, such as is not unfrequently seen in his countrymen of the East at the present day. His bright eyes are especially mentioned"; and generally he was remarkable for the grace of his figure and countenance—a well made man, and of immense strength and activity. In the Semitic countries of the East, which usually produce men of hard feature and of stern, rather than of attractive mien, there sometimes appear prodigies of grace, elegance, and wit.² David was one of these creatures born to charm,—one of these divinely favoured natures that irresistibly attract,—and he seems to have cultivated to the utmost the art of pleasing. We shall find him not only brave and enterprising, but skilful in all accomplishments which at that time could make life bright and agreeable.

¹ Stanley, *Jewish Church*, Lect. xxii. vol. ii. 48, 49.

Renan, *History of the People of Israel*, bk. ii. ch. xvi.

LIX. SAUL AND DAVID

1 SAM. xvi. 14-xix.

Said Abner, "At last thou art come! Ere I tell, ere thou speak,
Kiss my cheek, wish me well!" Then I wished it, and did kiss
his cheek.

Then I tuned my harp, took off the lilies we twine round its chords
Lest they snap neath the stress of the noontide—those sunbeams
like swords.

And I first played the tune all our sheep know . . .

. . . I say then,—my song
While I sang thus, assuring the monarch, and ever more strong
Made a proffer of good to console him,—he slowly resumed
His old motions and habitudes kingly. The right hand replumed
His black locks to their wonted composure, adjusted the swathes
Of his turban, and see—the huge sweat that his countenance bathes
He wipes off with the robes; and he girds now his loins as of yore
And feels slow for the armlets of price, with the clasp set before.
He is Saul, ye remember in glory,—ere terror had bent
The broad brow from the daily communion; and still though much
spent

Be the life and the bearing that front you, the same, God did
choose

To receive what a man may waste, desecrate, never quite lose.

Accounts of David's Introduction to Saul.—The early life of David was naturally a subject dear to the story-teller; and the later compilers of his history found many tales of him to their hand, varying in details as oft-told tales must vary. These they have set side by side, without attempt to reconcile them. So we have in 1 Samuel two different accounts of the introduction of his future successor to Saul. The first of these is comprised in vers. 14-23 of chap. xvi. The narrative is then interrupted by the second account, comprising chaps. xvii. and xviii. 1-5; then the previous narrative is again taken up and continued. The Greek version, however, has preserved a narrative free from these inconsistencies.

David's Music soothes Saul's Fits of Frenzy.—*Now the spirit of the LORD had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him.* This is the prophetic explanation of a strange frenzy which at times seized on this remarkable man, producing all the bodily signs which modern physicians connect

with epilepsy, and issuing in words and deeds of violence and hate towards those dearest to him. When the fit came upon him, the monarch's attendants suggested music. "What passion cannot music raise and quell?" It is said that Philip v. of Spain was cured of a fixed melancholy by the playing of a famous musician. David's skill on the harp had already won renown far beyond Bethlehem. When Saul said, *Provide me now a man that can play well*, one of his servants—traditionally, Doeg the Edomite—was loud in his recommendation. The young minstrel was summoned, and came, bringing the customary Eastern present, bread, wine, and a kid. *And David came to Saul, and stood before him: and he loved him greatly; and he became his armour-bearer.*

Both the Hebrew and Greek versions agree in giving this as the manner of David's first introduction to Saul; but the former, as indicated above, presently recounts another introduction, made by Abner after the victory over Goliath. This, with much more of this section, is omitted (Codex B of LXX.) by the Greek translators, who must have had before them a manuscript far older than any now extant.

David's early Exploits.—The fame of David's courage, proved while guarding his father's flocks from the bears that came down from Lebanon, and the lions that came up from the Jordan valley, had preceded him, as well as his renown as a minstrel. He was presented to Saul not only as *cunning in playing*, but as *a mighty man of valour, a man of war, and prudent in speech, and a comely person*—and, more than this, *Jehovah is with him*. The description points to more than a shepherd's adventure; and it is rendered probable by later notices that David had already been fighting the Philistines, by the side of the heroic Eleazar ben Dodo the Ahohite, before the famous encounter with Goliath (2 Sam. xxiii. 9; 1 Chron. xi. 12–14). They were fighting side by side at Ephes-Dammim, the place of the final great battle. And, as the name "boundary of blood" indicates, preliminary skirmishes may have taken place there. But, in spite of this, his youthful appearance made David's challenge of the gigantic Philistine appear ridiculous in the eyes of Saul. But the ardour of the youthful hero and his trust in God bore down everything, and he was allowed to take up the challenge.

Scene of the Encounter with Goliath.—An hour's ride from

Tel-es-Safi, the Gath of the Bible, the *Blanchegarde* of the Crusaders, up the Wady el-Sunt,¹ the modern name of the vale of Elah, brings us to a level plain, a quarter of a mile broad, where the Wady el-Sur turns southwards to Hebron, and the narrow Wady el-Jindy strikes up towards Bethlehem. This plain is probably the scene of David's encounter with Goliath, for to the south of it lies Shuweikeh, or Shocoh, on which the rear of the Philistines rested as they faced their foes across the ravine, which two streams have here combined to carve. Near by is Beit Fased, probably an echo of Ephes-Dammim. "It is the very battlefield for those ancient foes: Israel in one of the gateways to her mountain land; the Philistines on the low hills they so often overran."

Death of Goliath.—It is an encounter which brings together in brief space the whole contrast of the Philistine and Israelite warfare.² On the one hand is the huge giant, ten feet or more high, clothed in the complete armour for which his nation was renowned, and which is described piece by piece, as if to contrast with it the defencelessness not only of David, but of all Israel. "He is full of savage insolence and fury, unable to understand how anyone can contend against his brute strength and impregnable panoply." On the other hand is the small, agile youth, full of spirit and faith, refusing the royal offer of arms to which he was not accustomed; with only a shepherd's sling and five pebbles snatched from the watercourse as he crossed it, but confident in the help and the strength of the Lord of Hosts. "A single stone was enough. It penetrated the brazen helmet. The giant fell on his face, and the Philistine army fled down the pass, and were pursued as far as the gates of Gath and Ekron."

The Song of Triumph.—According to their wont, the Hebrew women met the victorious army on its return, *with timbrels, with joy, and with instruments of music. And the women sang one to another in their play, and said,*

Soul hath slain his thousands,

And David his ten thousands.

The youthful hero had cast the king himself into the shade.

Jealousy of Saul.—We cannot wonder that Saul became jealous, and that he should prefer to remove a possible rival

¹ G. A. Smith, *The Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, p. 227.

² Stanley, *Jewish Church*, Lect. XXII. vol. ii, 55, 56.

from his presence, and employ him elsewhere as captain of a thousand.¹ The king's mind was fatally clouded; and what another might have seen with pride and joy, making use of it for his own good and the good of his kingdom, appeared to him only as a threatening danger, and awakened in him gloomy suspicions. But we are glad to be able to follow the Greek version in omitting the attempt on David's life, to which the Hebrew narrative refers, the very next day. It is pleasanter to believe that still, if a fit of madness came on, the minstrel's harp had a charm for it.

David marries Michal.—But the hatred and suspicion could not but grow, as David's conduct of affairs won him more and more favour, not only in his own tribe of Judah, but in the northern tribes also. For he *behaved himself very wisely*. If Saul did not as yet actually attempt his life, he wished him killed, out of his way, and offered him the hand of one of his daughters without a dowry if David could bring, instead, a hundred foreskins of the Philistines—proof, like the Indian scalp, that as many enemies of Israel had fallen. The offer is accepted, and the hand, and with it the love, of Michal is won. Possibly the love had been gained before, and this seemed to fill up the measure of Saul's suspicion. And now the smothered violence does break out.

David's Life attempted—His Flight.—One day when David returned safe from a victorious expedition, Saul was suffering from a new attack of melancholy. As David tried to soothe him by playing on his harp, the king hurled his spear at him. David avoided it; but to stay longer in the palace was out of the question, and he hastened home. So far from being able to intervene to protect him, Michal urged instant flight. Saul had the house watched all the night, and next morning sent officers to seize David. They were told by the princess that he was sick. Saul ordered him to be brought as he was, in his bed; but on their second visit, when admitted to the room, they found in the bed, not David, but one of his wife's *teraphim*. David had escaped by the window.

David and Samuel.—Samuel was his natural protector, and he fled to him at Ramah. The prophet took him to Naioth, apparently the retreat of one of the prophetic guilds. It might almost seem as if David intended to devote himself, with his

¹ Kittel, *History of the Hebrews*, bk. ii. ch. ii.

musical and poetical gifts, to the prophetic office. Saul's messengers, instead of dragging back the fugitive, were seized with the afflatus, and remained. Again he sent messengers, and they prophesied also. Then he went himself, *and the spirit of God came upon him also. And he also stripped off his clothes, and he also prophesied before Samuel, and lay down naked all that day and all that night.* Once more the proverb passed from mouth to mouth, *Is Saul also among the prophets?*

LX. THE OUTLAW

1 SAM. XX.—XXVI.

Bold to bear God's heaviest load,
Dimly guessing at the road—
Rocky road, and scarce ascended,
Though thy foot be angel-tended.

David and Jonathan.—Apparently Saul tried to seize David at Naioth, for he fled from thence and went to his friend Jonathan. Classical literature presents many instances of romantic friendships,—Achilles and Patroclus, Orestes and Pylades, Damon and Pythias, and others,—but there is something more touching in the dear companionship of David and Jonathan than even Greece can show. *The soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.* The two were drawn together at the very first. The passage, it is true, describing their first exchange of vows is wanting in the Greek version, but its truth is confirmed by the account of the renewal of the vow, which it shares with the Hebrew. Each found in the other the affection he found not in his own family. No jealousy of the future eminence of a probable rival ever entered the simple, confiding heart of Jonathan. To be David's vizier will be enough for him. *Thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next to thee.* By the gift of his royal mantle, his sword, his girdle, and his famous bow, the prince on their very first interview had confirmed the compact which was to bind them together as by a sacramental union.

Growth of Saul's Hatred for David.—At a meeting of the

two friends a plan was concocted to discover the king's real sentiments towards David. The sudden attempt on his life may have been the outcome of a momentary fit of madness, and it was necessary to discover if the king's suspicion and jealousy were more than a temporary mood. As Saul's son-in-law and armour-bearer, David, along with Jonathan and Abner, dined daily at the palace. He would absent himself at the next New Moon Feast. If his absence was noticed, Jonathan was to observe his father's behaviour. The result showed that David's only chance of life lay in escape. Although up to this time both the king and himself had thought that a reunion was possible, it now appeared that the madness of Saul became constantly more settled and ferocious,—he even attempted to kill his own son,—and David's danger proportionately greater. The tidings of it were conveyed to him in a secret interview arranged between Jonathan and himself by a cairn, well known to them both. There the two friends parted, to meet only once more; and David became an outlaw.

David induces Ahimelech to receive him.—His refuge in the centre of prophetic influence had been discovered. He therefore turned to another sanctuary. A little to the north of Jerusalem, and commanding a view of that as yet unconquered city, as we learn from Isaiah's description of the march of Sennacherib, a little colony of priests had gathered round the Tabernacle at Nob. Ahimelech, who was at its head, somewhat reluctantly received the solitary fugitive, suspecting that something was wrong when he saw him unattended. David, ever ready in resource, represented that he was on a secret and urgent mission, and had appointed a rendezvous for his men. The latter part of the statement was no doubt true, and friends ready to share his fortunes may have been hidden in the neighbourhood.

The Giving of the Shewbread.¹—The incident that followed, slight as it might seem in the career of David, led to terrible results, and was fraught with a momentous lesson. By urgent entreaty Ahimelech was persuaded to give the wanderer five loaves from the table of shewbread, and the sword of Goliath from its place behind the priestly oracle, and by means of the oracle to give him counsel for his future guidance. As the loaves and sword were handed to David out of the sacred

¹ Stanley, *Jewish Church*, Lect. XXII, vol. ii. 61, 62.

curtain, his eye rested on a well-known face which filled him with dismay.

Treachery of Doeg—Massacre of the Priests at Nob.—It was Doeg the Edomite, keeper of Saul's stables, who for some ceremonial reason was at Nob. He, as David foresaw, carried the tale to his master, and there followed one of those ruthless massacres with which the history of the age abounds. It was Doeg who carried out the vengeance of Saul, for his Israelite followers would not lift a hand against priests. *But Doeg the Edomite turned, and he fell upon the priests, and he slew on that day fourscore and five persons that did wear a linen ephod. And Nob, the city of the priests, smote he with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children and sucklings, and oxen and asses and sheep, with the edge of the sword.*

"Jewish teachers, in later times, imagined that the hallowed loaves had become useless in the hands of the hungry fugitive. But a higher than Saul or David selected this act of Ahimelech as the one incident in David's life on which to bestow His especial commendation, because it contained, however tremulously and guardedly expressed, the great evangelical truth, that the ceremonial law must give way before the claims of suffering humanity."

Escape of Abiathar.—There was one survivor of the massacre of Nob, Abiathar, son of Ahimelech, who fled and afterwards joined David, and became of the greatest service to him, for he brought with him the oracular ephod, by means of which the fugitive was able to consult Jehovah as to the success of his undertakings.

David at Gath—He feigns Madness.—David had begun his flight southward, and, we may believe, would have continued it to the neighbourhood of Bethlehem had he not feared to put his family in peril. He accordingly turned westward, and sought an asylum among Saul's enemies, the Philistines. Saul could not pursue him there, but he had been mistaken in thinking he could pass without recognition. Achish, king of Gath, was kindly disposed; but David heard the courtiers recalling his victory over Goliath, and perceived his danger in Goliath's own city. As a modern Arab chief escaped from the governor of Acre by pretending to be a mad dervish, so David now assumed the violent gestures that marked the ecstasies of the prophetic schools: scratching or beating on the gates of the

city, as on a drum, letting his beard grow, and foaming at the mouth. The plan answered. The seeming madman was expelled from Gath by order of Achish.¹

The Cave of Adullam.—Shelter among friends and foes alike denied him, David had to make a hiding-place for himself. He found an admirable one in the famous cave of Adullam. It was in the Shephelah, the strip of hilly country between the central range of Judah and the maritime plain. David must have known there were convenient caves in the sides of the vale of Elah, for he had fought over the ground. It is a steep hill whose position suits what we are told of David's stronghold.² *Aid-el-ma* probably keeps alive the name Adullam. It stands well off the central range, and is very defensible. There is water in the valley, and near the top some large, low caves, partly artificial. The traditional Adullam at Khareitun, five miles south-east of Bethlehem, is perhaps more suitable, from its size, but our narrative does not say that the band that now began to form around the wanderer all found shelter there in one cave; on the contrary, it leads us to suppose that by the time David's following reached that number he was on his way to Moab. Except in this matter of size, *Aid-el-ma* answers all requirements.

David's Band of Outlaws.—Here, then, was formed what was for long a notorious band of freebooters, afterwards to grow into a magnificent royal bodyguard. Family connections began it—notably David's nephews, or at least one of them, Abishai. But there were many others glad to adopt a roving and predatory life. *And every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them: and there were with him about four hundred men.* Nameless outlaws most of these; but the name of one has come down to us, Ahimelech the Hittite, showing that the conquered Canaanites helped to swell the numbers of David's band.

David settles his Parents in Moab.—The first use made of this accession of strength brings the young adventurer before us in one of his most attractive features. He escorted his father and mother to Moab, the native land of his ancestress Ruth, and persuaded the king of that country to grant them an asylum.

¹ Stanley, *Jewish Church*, Lect. XXII. vol. ii. 62.

² G. A. Smith, *The Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, p. 229.

He returns to Judah.—He himself proposed a stay at Mizpah, a stronghold of Moab, but was dissuaded by the prophet Gad,—where and how the two met we are not told,—and advised, instead, to hide in the mountains of Judah. *Then David departed, and came into the forest of Hareth.*

Now that his parents were safe indeed, there was nothing to prevent the return of David to the neighbourhood of Bethlehem, where his knowledge of the locality would ensure him many a secure hiding-place from his pursuer. And if he was to be king, it was politically important that he should make himself a name in Judah.

Relief of Keilah.—An opportunity soon offered. *They told David, saying, Behold the Philistines are fighting against Keilah; and they rob the threshing-floors.* Keilah was a town of Judah, now Kela, in the Wady el-Sur, a continuation of the vale of Elah, making, with it, a great trench between the Shephelah and Judah. It lay conveniently open to Philistine attack. The forest of Hareth, where David lurked with his band of freebooters, lay to the north-east. The fears of the band at the notion of leaving their retreat were overcome by the oracle, and Keilah was relieved.

Saul pursues David.—Saul, hearing that David had taken possession of a walled town, thought he had him in a trap. But David hurriedly left Keilah, and for a time the whole Shephelah, for the wild country on the other side of Judah. He was now at the head of six hundred men. A powerful detachment from Judah and Benjamin, under his nephew Amasa, had joined him in Moab, and a little body of Gadite mountaineers had followed him thence, swimming the Jordan in flood-time to overtake him (1 Chron. xii. 8–18).

David at Ziph.—An hour's ride from Hebron in a south-easterly direction brings the traveller to a broad plateau, partly fertile and cultivated, partly bare, with limestone eminences, honeycombed by caves, breaking its surface. This was the district to which the outlaw now retreated. Ziph, Carmel, Maon, are to be found on it still, as Zif, Kurmul, Ma'an. To the east, Jeshimon, "the Wilderness," a region of wild irreclaimable desolation, "sinks in huge sun-smitten steeps to the Dead Sea."

Narrow Escapes of David.—Under the shade of the forest of Ziph, Jonathan visited David, the last meeting of the two friends.

Saul had probably pressed Jonathan into the pursuit, which now became unusually hot. Once, perhaps twice, the Ziphites betrayed the fugitive's retreat, and Saul hunted him out of it, like *a partridge*, or like *one flea*. On two, if not on three, occasions, the pursuer and pursued caught sight of each other. Of the first of these escapes the memory was long preserved in the name *Sela-hammahlekoth*, "Cliff of Divisions, or Slips," because David had slipped away from the very grasp of his enemy.

David spares Saul.—On another occasion, when Saul had forced his enemy to take refuge in a cave, En-Gedi, on a precipice overhanging the Dead Sea, the king was for a time in David's power, but he magnanimously let him go, as he did on yet another occasion, stealing from the sleeping camp the spear and pitcher of water placed at the monarch's head, as to-day at the head of the sheik when he takes his rest.

Partial Reconciliation with David.—The generosity shown by David on these occasions had its effect on Saul. He recognised at once the uselessness and the impiety of his persecution of the man chosen by God to succeed him. *Then said Saul, I have sinned : return, my son David, for I will no more do thee harm, because my soul was precious in thine eyes this day : behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly. . . . So David went his way, and Saul returned to his place.* There was to be at least a truce for a time.

The Story of Nabal.—The Carmel-Maon plateau is the scene of the incident of Nabal. David had only two modes of supporting his band : by brigandage, or by levying blackmail like an ancient Highland chief, or like the modern Bedawin, who thinks that he ought to be paid for what he does not steal, and who looks upon himself as the protector of those he does not plunder. Nabal ought, no doubt, to have been grateful that not one of his sheep was missing, for to have refrained from supplying their wants at his expense was, on the part of half-starved neighbours, very meritorious. He would have paid dearly for his churlish clinging to his rights had not his wife Abigail taken the matter in hand. On her husband's death she became wife to David, who married another woman of those parts also, Ahinoam. Michal had not followed David in his exile ; and as a woman, according to the ideas of those days, should never remain without a husband, her father had given her to one of his officers.

LXI. DEATH OF SAUL AND JONATHAN

1 SAM. xxvii.—2 SAM. i.

Ye mountains of Gilboa,
Let there be no dew nor rain upon you, neither fields of offerings;
For there the shield of the mighty was vilely cast away:
The shield of Saul, not anointed with oil,
From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty,
The bow of Jonathan turned not back,
And the sword of Saul returned not empty.
Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives,
And in their death they were not divided.
They were swifter than eagles,
They were stronger than lions.
Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul,
Who clothed you in scarlet delicately,
Who put ornaments of gold upon your apparel.
How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle!
Jonathan is slain upon thy high places.
I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan:
Very pleasant hast thou been unto me,
Thy love to me was wonderful,
Passing the love of women.
How are the mighty fallen,
And the weapons of war perished!

David joins the Philistines.—The Philistines had not been inactive while Saul was chasing David. More than once he had been compelled to abandon the pursuit in order to check their inroads. What we wonder is, that David, after the friendly parting with his king, did not solicit a complete reconciliation, and return to his allegiance and offer his services, and those of his warlike band, against the enemies of his country. This would have been the patriotic course. Instead, he adopted one which it is impossible to justify, very difficult to extenuate. He threw himself into the arms of Achish, king of Gath, who welcomed him warmly, seeing in him now a possible ally against Saul.

David at Ziklag.—He however had the prudence to allot him for his support a town far down on the frontier, Ziklag, which thus became an appanage of the royal house of Judah, as our narrative notices, thus incidentally showing that it was composed after the separation of the two kingdoms. The

increasing importance of the outlaw is indicated by the fact that a body of Benjamite archers and slingers, twenty-three of whom are specially named (1 Chron. xii. 1-7, 20-22), joined him from the very tribe of his rival. *Day by day there came to David to help him, until it was a great host, like the host of God.*

David's Treachery to Achish.—But he could only maintain the confidence which Achish reposed in him by treachery to his protector. He sent out expeditions which pillaged and massacred the nomad tribes of the desert of Paran, especially the Amalekites. These tribes were the friends of the Philistines, and therefore, to prevent news of them reaching Gath, he took the precaution of killing men, women, and children. He brought back, in the way of booty, no prisoners—nothing but the flocks and apparel. And when Achish asked, *Whither have ye made a raid to-day?* he replied: *Against the Negeb of Judah, or against the Negeb of the Jerahmeelites, and against the Negeb of the Kenites*, tribes which were friendly to Judah.¹ "Achish was delighted, for he shared the booty, and said to himself that by such exploits David was rendering himself odious to his fellow-countrymen, and this would bind him to his service for ever."

Philistine Campaign against Central Palestine — David's Dilemma.—It did last a year and four months, but then David found himself in an embarrassing situation. The Philistines had been gathering their strength for a determined effort to re-establish that hold in Central Palestine from which they had been shaken by Saul. Achish naturally called for David's services in this expedition. He gave an ambiguous reply. *Therefore thou shalt know what thy servant can do.* The Philistine was, however, satisfied, and promised to make his ally captain of his bodyguard. *Therefore will I make thee keeper of mine head for ever.* But he was extricated from this dilemma by the suspicion of the other Philistine princes. David's contingent marched as a rearguard to the Philistine army from the mustering-place, Aphek,—possibly a district, but in any case a locality difficult of identification,—into the valley of Jezreel. When the officers of Achish represented how much it was to be feared that David would turn round upon them in the day of battle, and reconcile himself to his

¹ Renan, *History of the People of Israel*, bk. ii. ch. xvi.

old master at the expense of his new allies, David was sent away, and in three days was back at Ziklag.

Ziklag destroyed by Amalek.—A terrible surprise awaited him. Taking advantage of his absence, the Amalekites had invaded the Negeb, pillaging equally the Judahites, the Calebites, and the Philistines. They had seized upon Ziklag and burned it. The women and all that was there, including David's two wives, had fallen into their hands. Great was the desolation. The people had lost their children. There were symptoms of an outbreak against David, and even of stoning him. He resolved, after consulting the oracle, to go in pursuit of the marauders.

David's Vengeance.—The expedition was eminently successful. The Amalekites, tracked by the help of an Egyptian slave, whom his master had left to die of hunger, were taken unawares, and nearly all killed. Everything was recovered, and an immense booty captured besides. David made an arrangement on this occasion, which became a settled custom, that two-thirds of the plunder should go to those who fought, one-third to those detached to guard the baggage. His own great share enabled him to conciliate a number of influential people of Judah by lavish gifts.

Two days after the return to Ziklag, a runner came from the camp of Saul to announce the defeat of Israel at Gilboa, and the death of Saul and Jonathan.

Movements of the Philistines.—This is what had happened. The Philistines had arranged to make a desperate struggle to regain their ascendancy over Israel. Apparently their plan was to subjugate all the low country, and so confine Israel to the hills; and at the same time they might secure their caravan route to Damascus and the East. In the plain of Esdraelon, too, their chariots could manœuvre freely. They had pitched their camp on the southern slope of the range called the hill of Moreh, by the town of Shunem.¹

Desperate Situation of Saul.—Saul with Jonathan mustered what forces they could when even Manassites and Benjamites were going over to David, and took up a strong position on Mount Gilboa, on the opposite side of the vale of Jezreel. But though his position was strong, Saul's heart was not strong. *When he saw, across the valley, the host of the*

¹ G. A. Smith, *Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, p. 400.

Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart trembled greatly. He seems to have realised his desperate situation all at once. And at this crisis all supports failed him. Samuel was dead, and there was no prophet-voice to inspire him with courage. *And when he inquired of Jehovah, Jehovah answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets.* All the oracles to which he had formerly trusted were dumb. And his old audacity had deserted him. He could no longer in an emergency act with decision. Left alone to himself, he could find the needed energy neither in himself, nor in religious zeal, which, as must always be the case when it has swerved from the moral principle which alone can guide it, turned into a wild and desperate superstition.

Saul and the Witch of Endor.—Hearing that there was at Endor, some twelve miles away, a witch, a solitary survivor of the decree of banishment he had himself made against those who had practised magic, Saul determined to consult her.

Flectere si nequeo superos Acheronta movebo.

It is hopeless to try to understand this incident. Magic is at home in the East; and ventriloquism, which the language of the narrative—at least as understood by the Greek translators—implies to have been a practice of this woman, may have had its part. All that we know is that Saul thought he saw and heard Samuel, and that the figure he saw and heard told him the worst.

Battle of Mount Gilboa—Death of Saul.—But he who had begun as a hero could die as a brave man. Saul could fight, if he could not resolve. The Philistines, to give play to their cavalry and chariots, appear to have made a circuit round Jezreel, and to have delivered their attack on the southern slopes of Gilboa. The north was too precipitous for cavalry. ¹ “The details of the fight are but seen in broken snatches, as in the short scenes of a battle acted on a stage. But amid the shower of arrows from the Philistine archers, or pressed hard on the mountain slope by their charioteers, the figure of the king emerges from the darkness. His three sons have fallen before him. His armour-bearer lies dead beside him. But on his own head is the royal crown, and on his arm the royal bracelet.” The shield has fallen from his arm and lies in the dust, never

¹ Stanley, *Jewish Church*, Lect. XXI. vol. ii. 30.

again to be polished with oil for the light. The huge spear is still in his hand. He is leaning heavily upon it. He has received a fierce wound, but he is not yet dead. Never must the anointed fall alive into the hands of the uncircumcised, to be insulted and abused. Saul falls on his own sword.

Character of Saul.—It is very significant that Saul fell finally by his own hand, for, ever since his star began to decline, it was his fate to consume his own energies through suspicion and blind passion, and in his delusion to plot his own ruin.¹ That a hero died on Gilboa we can no more doubt than did David, when he tuned his harp to his noble dirge. This man seemed to be called to do great things. A nature richly gifted, quick to decide, firm of hand, bold in venture, valiant in battle, animated by zeal for the greatness of Israel, and devoutly attached to Jehovah, he stopped suddenly short in his career, paralysed by a mysterious power. He all at once showed himself unequal to the task imposed upon him, without our being able to say wherein exactly his weakness or his fault lay.

Perhaps, with all his patriotic zeal, Saul was deficient in the deeper understanding of Israel's peculiar religious character and mission. Hence the estrangement between him and Samuel, whose prophetic spirit was so quick to see the nation's true destiny.

And we perceive that with all his noble gifts, and all that enthusiasm which at times amounted to prophetic ecstasy, there were associated in Saul, even in happier days, a blind zeal, a wild fanaticism, and a dangerous superstition. His temperament—now sanguine, now moody—was precisely that which is apt to lead to a fatal melancholy. The infatuated man plunges deeper and deeper in mental gloom, and ends the tragedy of his life with his own hand.

¹ Kittel, *History of the Hebrews*, bk. ii. ch. ii.

LXII. DAVID KING AT HEBRON.

2 SAM. i.-iv. ; 1 CHRON. iii. 1-4-xi. 1-4.

Some are born kings,
Made up of three parts fire ; so full of heaven
It sparkles at their eyes ; inferior souls
Know them as soon as seen, by sure instinct,
To be their lords, and naturally worship
The secret God within them.

Chronology and Contemporary History.—Saul's death happened about 1050 B.C. We know little of the rest of the world at that date. According to mythical chronology, the Dorian occupation of the Peloponnese had taken place, and Codrus, the last legendary king of Athens, was still alive. The maritime prosperity of the Phœnicians had begun. The famed Assyrian conqueror, Tiglath-pileser I., had reigned and gone. In Egypt the twenty-first dynasty was ruling.

David and the Authorship of the Psalms.—The manner in which David received the news of his rival's death shows him in one of his most attractive aspects. Fifty years ago the only difficulty in painting the character of David lay in its complexity. The picture of him given in the historical books could be corrected and improved from the Psalms, many of which at least were then universally believed to be from his pen. Now this is impossible. In spite of extreme criticism, we may still see his hand in some of those inspired hymns ; and pious souls, delighting in their sentiments of resignation and trust, will still fancy themselves in communion with him. But too great doubt has arisen to make it lawful to use them for historical purposes. We can no longer measure the depth of his penitence by Psalm li., nor the fervour and purity of his religious aspirations by Psalm lxiii. We are thrown back on the history proper, and some are inclined to place its subject on a far lower pinnacle than he once held. They would make the outlaw no better than a bandit, the monarch no better than an Oriental despot of the common type : crafty, cruel, vindictive, religious as religion then went, loyal to Jehovah, because successful through His help. In such an estimate the lamentation over Saul was only a theatrical display of grief.

His Lament for Saul sincere.—The answer is, that it does

not read like this. There is the ring of genuine sorrow in every word of the noble Song of the Bow, and the indignation which doomed the Amalekite for daring to lay hands on the Lord's anointed, as he pretended to have done, was never assumed.

The wretch had quite mistaken the character of the man for whom he fabricated the fatal tale. There is no reason to doubt the anecdotes that tell of David's magnanimity in sparing Saul's life when he had him in his power; and to suspect him of a pretence of sorrow on this occasion, when the whole tone of the narrative is against such a suspicion, is to do cruel injustice to documents which, even if they love to glorify David, do not hesitate to paint his crimes in the blackest colours.

David received as King by Judah.—Much of the outlaw life had been spent in the neighbourhood of Hebron, and to that city, not without Divine direction, David now determined to go. It was as yet by far the most important of the cities of Judah, his own tribe, and he had taken care to make many friends around it, and at this very moment was able to win over the tribal chiefs by presents from the Amalekite spoil (see above, p. 220). His appearance there with his six hundred followers and his two wives would not be unexpected. Prophetic voices had already proclaimed his royalty. His tribesmen generally looked to him as leader, and now came to offer him the crown. They anointed him king over the house of Judah. There was no fear of opposition to this step from the Philistines. David was still a vassal of Achish, and it would suit Philistine plans to have in Judah a rival and enemy of the house of Saul; for, as shown by their conduct in the case of Samson, this tribe had always Philistine leanings.

The tendency in Palestine was always more to two rival nations than to one. The relations between the northern and the southern tribes had never from the first been cordial. But here, for the first time, we note the rise of the distinction between Israel and Judah, which eighty years afterwards became a settled political arrangement.

Ishbosheth proclaimed King by Abner.—It was nearly anticipated now. Besides Jonathan and his two brothers killed in the battle of Gilboa, Saul had a fourth son, called Esh-Baal, *man of Baal*, i.e. probably, in the feeling of the time, *man of*

Jehovah, afterwards changed, according to the Hebrew custom of treating historical names formed with Baal, to *Ishbosheth*, *man of shame*. Abner, Saul's great captain, fixed on him as rightful successor; and having, it would seem, passed the Jordan with the remains of the defeated Israelite army, he proclaimed him at Mahanaim. The need of abandoning the royal residence of Gibeah, and of retreating across the Jordan, shows that the Philistines had lost no time in improving their victory. Indeed, we are expressly told that *the men of Israel that were on the other side of the valley, and they that were on the other side of the Jordan, forsook the cities, and the Philistines came and dwelt in them*. This would refer to cities in the Jordan valley on both sides of the stream, including Beth-shean. It was a bad choice that Abner had made, for Ishbosheth proved but a puppet in his hands. But that may have been what he wanted. Ostensibly, the royal power was continued in the house of the Benjamite hero, and there was as yet no sign of favour for David outside his own tribe.

Burial of Saul and his Sons.—He was not, however, the man to lose an opportunity of winning sympathy for himself in his rival's domain. The Philistines had made a trophy of Saul's armour in the temple of Ashtaroth, but his body and those of his sons they had fastened on the walls of Beth-shean. But the men of Jabesh-gilead, mindful of Saul's rescue of their city, *went all night*, and took the bodies, burnt them, and buried the ashes under *the tamarisk tree in Jabesh, and fasted seven days*.

David's Message to Jabesh-gilead.—As soon as he heard of this noble exploit, David hastened to send a message of congratulation to the men of Jabesh-gilead, and at the same time adroitly reminded them that their obligations to the house of Saul were at an end, and might be transferred to himself. *Now therefore let your hands be strong, and be ye valiant: for Saul your lord is dead, and also the house of Judah have anointed me king over them*.

But if it was intended to win over any of the North to David, the embassy was not successful. Abner marched into Benjamin, and took up a position at Gibeon, probably because there was some fear of disaffection to Ishbosheth there. Saul, it appears, in a fit of zeal had tried to exterminate the Amorites, whose fathers Joshua had allowed to inhabit it.

Joab defeats Abner—Death of Asahel.—But David had a force in the neighbourhood under Joab, one of the three sons of Zeruiah. We shall hear much of this great captain. The two armies faced one another near a reservoir, still to be seen. Both generals would have liked to decide the issue of the day by a duel between picked men from each side ; but the combat did not turn out as expected. Each of the twelve on either side killed his man, and a general battle then took place, which ended in favour of David. Abner was so hotly pursued by Asahel, Joab's youngest brother, that in self-defence he struck back at him with the butt end of his spear, spiked for sticking in the ground, and most reluctantly killed him. Joab and Abishai, the other brother, pursued in the direction of the Jordan ; but the Benjamites rallied on the top of a hill, and negotiations were opened. The men of Abner succeeded in recrossing the Jordan and reaching Mahanaim. Joab and his force marched all night, and came to Hebron. Asahel was buried in the family tomb at Bethlehem.

Abner negotiates with David—Murder of Abner.—This war of skirmishes between the two kingdoms continued a long time. But *David waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker*. Presently a harem quarrel sowed dissension between Ishbosheth and Abner. The king accused his minister of wanting to marry Rizpah, who had been in Saul's harem. Abner at once began to make overtures to David. David insisted, as a preliminary condition, that his former wife, Michal, should be restored to him ; and sent a formal demand to Ishbosheth to that effect. The weak semblance of a monarch could only yield, and David appeared once more in the light of Saul's son-in-law. Abner, with twenty men, brought the princess to Hebron, and was there murdered by Joab, who was pledged by Hebrew-Arab ideas to avenge Asahel.

Burial of Abner.—Joab got rid of a rival, and David lost a friend. He tried to make it universally felt that he had no responsibility for Abner's death. Indeed, he had nothing to gain by it. He imprecated a dreadful curse on Joab, and complained privately to some friends of his inability to check the ambition and pride of his powerful nephews. He ordered a public funeral for the fallen hero, himself followed the bier, and composed an elegy, part of which has survived.

Should Abner die as a fool dieth ?

Thy hands were not bound nor thy feet put in fetters.

As a man falleth before the children of iniquity, so didst thou fall.

Abner, till he threw off his allegiance to Ishbosheth, had been the life and soul of the Northern opposition to David. But once become traitor to the cause of the house of Saul, it was his interest to carry out his designs in favour of David to their completion. David had only to accept the fruits of a conspiracy which did not originate with himself. He had therefore real reason to mourn the loss of Abner.

Death of Ishbosheth—David executes his Murderers.—But the disaffection of the one support of Ishbosheth's throne had already done its work. Perhaps, in the understanding come to between Abner and his associates, the fate of the weak monarch had been involved. At all events, he was soon put out of the way by assassination. Two Benjamites of Beeroth, Rechab and Baanah, entered his house at Mahanaim in the siesta-hour. The woman sifting wheat at the door had fallen asleep over her task. The ill-fated king was asleep on his bed. The assassins carried his head to Hebron, and were received in the same spirit as the Amalekite after Gilboa. *And David commanded his young men, and they slew them, and cut off their hands and their feet, and hanged them up beside the pool in Hebron. But they took the head of Ishbosheth, and buried it in the grave of Abner in Hebron.*

David sole Aspirant to the Throne.—But the last obstacle to the extension of David's rule over all Israel was now removed. The last of Saul's sons was dead, and all save Jonathan had died without male offspring. Merib-baal, or Mephibosheth, was only about twelve years old and was lame, and there appears to have been no thought of his succeeding to the throne. There still remained of Saul's posterity the two sons of Rizpah, but these were also still young. If in a king North as well as South Palestine wanted a man to ward off the Philistine attacks, all eyes would naturally turn to Hebron. Besides, was not he who now reigned there the anointed of Jehovah ?

LXIII. DAVID, KING OF ISRAEL

2 SAM. v.-vii., viii. 15-18 ; 1 CHRON. xi. 1-9, xiii., xiv., xv., xvi.

He chose David also His servant,
And took him from the sheepfolds ;
From following the ewes that give suck He brought him,
To feed Jacob His people, and Israel His inheritance.
So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart ;
And guided them by the skilfulness of his hands.

The second Anointing of David.—On the death of Ishbosheth the throne, so long waiting for David, was at last vacant, and the united voice of the whole people at once called him to occupy it. A deputation representing all the tribes came to Hebron, claiming the king of Judah as *their bone and their flesh*. But besides this tie of relationship, two other reasons were given for their action: the proved capacity of David as a military leader, and the fact of the Divine choice. A solemn league was made, but we do not know its terms. In virtue of the extended sovereignty, the monarch was anointed anew. David was now thirty years old. His reign at Hebron had lasted seven years and a half.

Action of the Philistines.—*And when the Philistines heard that they had anointed David king over Israel, all the Philistines went up to seek David ; and David heard of it, and went down to the hold.*

This prompt action on the part of the Philistines was just what we should expect. With a vassal of their own reigning at Hebron, they easily preserved their predominance in the central and northern parts of Western Palestine. But with a redoubted warrior, accepted king of all Israel, the situation was changed. They struck quickly, and apparently struck hard. The hold into which David retreated was probably his old refuge, Adullam (2 Sam. xxiii. 13).

Battle of Baal-Perazim.—There he waited, like Alfred at Athelney, till his powers were ready and his time was come. Then, in a valley between Jerusalem and Bethlehem, the valley of Rephaim (giants), he attacked the Philistines in their camp, and routed them. It was time, for Bethlehem was in their hands, and Hebron was threatened. This battle of Baal-Perazim (master of breaches) left abiding recollections. Isaiah refers to it (xxviii. 21).

But the enemy returned to their old camp. On this occasion David was directed by a Divine oracle to *make a circuit*, and fall on their rear. He was to wait *for the sound of marching in the mulberry trees*, and then to make his attack. It was completely successful.

Final Campaign against the Philistines.—There must have been much more fighting before these obstinate foes were reduced to the submissive, or friendly, position in which we presently find them. In fact we read of a muster of thirty thousand men, though nothing is said of their employment (vi. 1). It is strange that the narratives which have been so copious and explicit on the quarrel of Saul and David, become meagre in the extreme as to the Philistine conquest. We have, it is true, some fragments of what may have been a detailed account of David's wars, in which are related the daring exploits of his foremost warriors. There we read how *three mighty men brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem*, of which David had longed to drink. *But he would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto Jehovah. And he said, Be it far from me, O Jehovah, that I should do this : shall I drink the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives* (2 Sam. xxiii. 16).

There, too, we read of giants killed, Saph by Sibbecai the Hushathite, and Goliath the Gittite (or his brother) by Elhanan the Bethlehemite, and the monster with six fingers and six toes who was slain by David's nephew, Jonathan (2 Sam. xxi. 18).

These adventures and others may have occurred in battles fought under the very walls of Gath, in a campaign which the history sums up in the sentence : *And after this it came to pass, that David smote the Philistines, and subdued them : and David took the bridle of the mother city out of the hand of the Philistines* (2 Sam. viii. 1).

After this the Philistines, giving up the hope of prevailing by force against David, appear, like the Canaanites of an earlier date, to have set themselves more and more to come to terms with Israel as neighbours, and live in peace and friendliness.¹

David had now given Israel freedom. He must also give it a sense of unity. For this a national centre was required, round which the life of the people, political as well as religious, might gather. Saul had neglected to give the nation a capital.

¹ Kittel, *History of the Hebrews*, bk. ii. ch. iii.

David was wiser. Hebron was too far south. Moreover, a place was wanted not exclusively identified with Judah, and yet connected with it.

Siege of the Fortress of Jebus.—The Amorite stronghold Jebus, just on the border of Benjamin, met the requirements of the case as no other place in Israel did. It had never been captured. Its inhabitants boasted that it was impregnable, and, when David assaulted it, dared him to take it even when defended only by the lame and blind of the place. Indeed, its military position was as advantageous as its political. It stood on a rocky plateau, surrounded on three sides by deep ravines. Herodotus compares Jerusalem to Sardis. Like Sardis, it was apparently taken through too great confidence in its natural defences. The accounts we have of the siege are too confused and too brief to show us any details, but Joab appears to have scaled the rocks, and won himself the post of commander-in-chief by his first setting foot on the walls. The origin of a Jerusalem proverb, *The blind and the lame shall not come into the house*, was referred to this event, but its meaning is obscure.

The Rebuilding of Zion.—The Jebusite fortress-city was composed of the fortress of Zion, which must have been situated on the eastern eminence, where the mosque of el-Aksa now stands, and of a lower town (Ophel), which extends down to the well which was called Gihon.¹ David rebuilt the upper town of Zion, the citadel of Millo, and all the neighbouring quarters. This became known as *The City of David*. And here began the developments, political and religious, which made David's reign the ideal to which all after ages of Israel looked back. Tyrian architects built him a palace there. Intercourse with Phœnicia brought wealth. Such signs of splendour and power had never before been seen. All things—warlike success, the friendship of Hiram, and the enthusiasm of the people—conspired to make David perceive that *Jehovah had established him king over Israel, and that He had exalted His kingdom for His people Israel's sake*.

The Ark brought from Kirjath-jearim—Death of Uzzah.—But how was the new capital to become a religious, as it had become a political, centre? The ancient shrine of the Mosaic age, the ark of God, had been almost forgotten. Neither Saul nor the priests of Nob, the successors of the priests of Shiloh,

¹ Renan, *History of the People of Israel*, bk. ii. ch. xviii.

had shown any interest in it. David determined to bring it to Jerusalem. The ceremony of translation was a solemn one. Kirjeath-jearim, where it had found a resting-place on its restoration after the battle of Aphek, was about five miles from Jerusalem. A new cart was made, the sacred coffer was placed upon it, and oxen drew it down from the hill on which the house of Abinadab stood, driven by his two sons, Uzzah and Ahio. *And David and all the house of Israel played before Jehovah* to the sound of harps, timbrels, and other instruments. On the way an accident happened to one of the drivers. *Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen stumbled. And the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God.* This was the interpretation natural to the religious thought of the time. David had none to teach him that those on whom the tower of Siloam fell were not sinners above others. He naturally regarded the death of Uzzah as a judgment, and was afraid, and left the ark in the house of the Gittite, Obed-edom, where it remained three months. There only blessings attended it, and the king, recovering from his superstitious fright, completed his purpose.

The Ark at Jerusalem.—Even more pomp and ceremony attended this second journey of the ark. At every six paces oxen and fatlings were sacrificed. David, girded with a linen ephod, *danced before Jehovah with all his might, . . . and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of God with shouting and with the sound of the trumpet.* So Zion was reached, where a tabernacle had been pitched for the shrine, doubtless beside the palace.

David forbidden to build a Temple.—He wished to build a temple to supersede this temporary structure; but Nathan was commissioned to forbid the enterprise, promising that this work should be performed by David's successor. But David carried the idea ever afterwards in his mind, and occupied himself in his later years in making ample preparations for his son's task.

The people were delighted with David's dancing, but it offended Michal, who saw it from the window of the harem. David's answer showed his wisdom. This was the crowning stroke of his policy. Jerusalem was now in every sense his capital, and he was firmly established on the throne. Thus

Jebus became *Jerusalem*, a royal and a sacred city, sacred for all time. The meaning of the new name is still doubtful. Indeed, it was not new, but very ancient, for it appears in the Tel-el-Amarna correspondence as *Uru-Salim*, i.e. either City of Peace, or City of the god *Salmo*. The sacred associations which came to be connected with Jerusalem were of course the slow growth of centuries. We must wait long till we see it the undoubted capital, religious as well as political, of the whole Jewish nation, when the pilgrims could sing, as in Psalm cxxii. :

Jerusalem is builded as a city which is compact together : whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the LORD.

But the profound significance of his own work could hardly fail to occupy a mind like David's. The historian tells us that on the arrival of the ark at its resting-place, *he blessed the people in the name of Jehovah of Hosts* ; and that Psalm xxiv. reflects his sense of the importance to religion of his capital we cannot doubt.

Lift up your heads, O ye gates ;

And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors :

And the King of Glory shall come in.

But his faith and hope may have taken a yet wider sweep, and he may have anticipated the moral power which a pure central worship was to exert, as so finely expressed in the question and answer of Psalm xv.

David's Harem.—The harem of David, which at Hebron had been small, was increased at Jerusalem by a great number of wives and concubines, and at least eleven sons were born to him during this later period. This introduction of polygamy on a great scale had the most disastrous consequences.

David's Court and Ministers.—The organisation of his court naturally followed David's choice of a capital. If we confine ourselves to the picture of the Government given in the Book of Samuel, neglecting the more elaborate details of the Chronicler, of whose authority we cannot be sure, the ministerial organisation may be described in a few lines. The number of persons employed about the court was very limited, and the forms of procedure must have been very simple. The king, of course, was supreme legislator and supreme judge, the final court of appeal, always open to the humblest suppliant. The

princes of the royal house were ministers of state.¹ Joab was, what Abner had been to Saul, *sar saba*, captain of the host, generalissimo, grand vizier, chief subject. Seraiah was *sopher*, that is to say, scribe, or secretary of state, intrusted with the ordering and discharge of the non-military functions of government. Jehoshaphat ben Ahilud was *maskir*, that is, chancellor, archivist, historiographer. It is probably from his pen that much of the Book of Samuel is derived. Gad and Nathan, the prophets, the latter of whom is said to have compiled a history of the reign, stood by as informal advisers. David, unlike Saul, always obediently listened to the prophets.

David's Army.—The military organisation was, as we should suppose under a warrior-king, more elaborate. The army or Host, while it still consisted wholly of infantry, was no longer entirely composed of militia levied for the occasion. Even Saul had possessed a permanent bodyguard. David brought to the throne the nucleus of a fine force, six hundred, who had gathered round him in the days of his wandering life, and had gradually gained the name of the *gibborim*, or heroes. These have been compared to the Preobajinsky regiment, which formed the nucleus of the Russian army. From them was formed a sort of Legion of Honour, composed of thirty of the most illustrious of David's paladins. Among them were three, the most illustrious of all after Joab, Abishai, and Benaiah (2 Sam. xxiii. 8, 9; 1 Chron. xi. 11, 12). These were Jashobeam (or Adino), Eleazar ben Dodo, and Shammah ben Agee. Besides this Old Guard, there was a kind of household brigade composed of foreigners (Cherethites and Pelethites, *i.e.* probably Cretans and Philistines), mostly of Philistine origin, with Benaiah as captain. They may be compared to the Scottish Archers of the French kings, or the Swiss Guard of a later time.

Religious Organisation.—David as Priest.—That David set on foot a religious organisation of some kind, in which the Levites played an important part, can also hardly be doubted. From the Book of Samuel we find that Zadok the son of Ahitub, and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar, were the priests. But functions at a later time confined to the priestly body were exercised by David himself. He offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings when he moved the ark to Zion. On the same occasion he displayed his love for music, possibly his skill in it,

¹ Renan, *History of the People of Israel*, bk. iii. ch. ii.

and there is every probability that both his poetical and musical gifts were used in arranging services for the temporary home of the ark.

LXIV. DAVID'S WARS

2 SAM. viii., x., xi. ; 1 KINGS xi. 14-20 ; 1 CHRON. xviii.-xx.

That Thy beloved may be delivered,
 Save with Thy right hand, and answer us.
 God hath spoken in His holiness ; I will exult ;
 I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth,
 Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine ;
 Ephraim also is the defence of mine head ;
 Judah is my sceptre,
 Moab is my washpot ;
 Upon Edom will I cast out my shoe ;
 Philistia shout thou because of me.
 Who will bring me into the strong city ?
 Who hath led me into Edom ?

There was something chivalrous about the Philistine wars. They were struggles of young and proud heroes, recalling the battles under the walls of Troy. But the wars which David was to wage with the neighbouring Semitic tribes were of a very different character. They were of atrocious ferocity, and it makes us sad to find the sacred narratives relating them with calm impassiveness as ordinary occurrences—as the natural way in which the subjects of Jehovah must treat those of Chemosh or Moloch. We have a summary account of these wars, without any guide to their chronological sequence.

War with Moab.—Possibly Moab was first attacked, and apparently in the depth of winter. What grievance could have taken David across the Jordan at such a time against a people not only hitherto friendly, but even related to him, we are not told. It is a Jewish tradition that the king of Moab broke the trust which David had reposed in him, and put to death the aged parents committed to his charge. If this was so, it was revenged with terrible severity. It is more probable that Moab had joined a coalition of the various peoples east of Jordan, formed in jealousy of David's growing power, and his severe measures were dictated by policy rather than revenge. All the

conquered Moabites were made to lie in a line upon the ground, and two-thirds were measured off for death. The country was reduced to a state of vassalldom, and condemned to pay tribute; and the treasures of Heshbon and Ar were carried off for the temple which David was hoping to build. Benaiah appears to have won his post as captain of the royal guard by his three exploits in this campaign (2 Sam. xxiii. 20).

Quarrel with the Ammonites.—A campaign of greater magnitude, and leading to results of far greater importance, was that undertaken against the Ammonites. It began, as many wars both in ancient and modern times have begun, through an insult offered to an ambassador. The old king Nahash, as Saul's enemy, had possibly been well disposed towards his rival David, and on his death the Israelite king sent a message of condolence to his successor. But the Ammonite chiefs were very ill-disposed, and maintained that these ambassadors were spies sent to prepare for an attack on Rabbath-Ammon (or Rabbah). The envoys were accordingly treated with great indignity. Half their beards were shaved off. Rather than submit to such an insult a modern Arab would rather die. Their flowing robes of office were clipped short. To spare them the mortification of returning to Jerusalem in such a ridiculous plight, David ordered them to tarry at Jericho till their beards were grown, and prepared to avenge the insult.

The Canaanite Coalition.—The Ammonites saw that they too must prepare. The coalition already planned was formed. It was joined by the populations of the Hauran, the men of Tob, the king of Maacah, and by the Aramæan peoples of Rehob and Zobah, who supplied a strong contingent of troops. The exact situation of these places is doubtful, but their mention together implies a sort of coalition of the tribes immediately east and north of Canaan. According to the Book of Chronicles, the allies mustered at Medeba, but the older narrative points to a union to defend Rabbah. Joab, who was in command of the Israelite army, divided it into two corps, one of which, under his brother Abishai, was to attack the city, while the other, under his own orders, was to fall upon the Aramæans in the open. The Syrian troops fled in disorder, and the Ammonites, seeing this, took refuge in their city, and Joab, making no attempt to force his way in, returned to Jerusalem.

Victories over the Syrians.—But the Syrians of the Hermon

and Anti-Lebanon were to find that matters could not end here. They knew David would not be slow to follow up his advantage, and they formed a new coalition under Hadadezer, king of Zobah, calling to their aid the Aramæans *that were beyond the river, i.e. Euphrates*. Shobach (or Shophach) commanded, and had to match himself against David in person, who had put himself at the head of his army for this campaign. A decisive battle, in which the Syrians were completely routed and Shophach killed, was fought at a place Helam, which may possibly be Aleppo. Damascus now intervened, but could not save the confederates from a new defeat, which put the whole country as far as the Euphrates into David's power, had he wished to extend his dominion so far. He apparently contented himself with Damascus as the northern limit of his conquest, putting a garrison into it. Horses and chariots in great numbers, and large treasures of gold and brass were captured in this campaign. The horses appeared useless to David, and were houghed. The gold and brass was carried to his capital.

David acquired great fame from this expedition, and Toi, king of Hamath on the Orontes, sent his son Joram, a Hebrew name adopted instead of Hadoram, possibly as a compliment, with rich vessels of silver and gold and brass, which were dedicated to God.

Conquest of Edom.—It may have been while David was conducting this campaign in person that Joab and Abishai effected the conquest of Edom. The Edomites were overcome in the Valley of Salt, to the south of the Dead Sea. Joab set himself with cold-blooded cruelty to exterminate the race. The king was killed. His son, Hadad or Hadar, fled to Egypt, where he was well received by the Pharaoh, who gave him a house and lands, and married him to the sister of his wife Tahpenes, by whom he had a son, who was brought up in the palace with the Egyptian princes.

Second Campaign against the Ammonites.—To the same relentless soldier, when the next spring came, *the time when kings go out to battle*, the task of punishing Ammon was handed over. There was no further help for them from the Syrians.

Joab ravaged the land of Ammon, and then attacked Rabbah. It consisted of a lower town and a citadel. The lower town, from the unusual sight of a perennial stream of water rising in it and running through it, was called "the City of Waters."

This Joab took, after how long a siege we are not told, and not without loss from the frequent sallies made by the besieged. Uriah the Hittite fell in leading a forlorn hope against a fatal quarter.

Capture of Rabbah.—At last this part of the city was taken, and only Rabbah proper, the citadel, remained. Then, with the true loyalty of his character, Joab sent a triumphant message to his uncle at Jerusalem, inviting him to come and finish the war for himself, *lest I take the city, and it be called after my name*. The king was roused from his ease. His guards were already at Rabbah. He came, put himself at their head, and took the citadel. A famous gold crown, either of the king or adorning the head of the image of Moloch, was part of the spoil, and was set on David's head. The Ammonites had provoked the war and could expect little mercy. According to the Hebrew text they were treated with the barbaric cruelty that always formed part and parcel of Eastern warfare, and died under tortures like those depicted on the monuments of Assyrian conquerors. But for David's own sake we would gladly follow the Greek translators, and take their language as descriptive only of forced labour, especially as the king had come away from Jerusalem repentant for his own great sin. But his notions of Jehovah did not unfortunately encourage feelings of humanity towards foes and strangers. The mercy of the God of Israel was in those days believed to end with Israel.

So David and all the people returned to Jerusalem, taking immense booty with them.

LXV. COURT LIFE AT JERUSALEM

2 SAM. ix., xi.—xv. 1-14.

Quæritis, Ægisthus quare sit factus adulter?
In promptu causa est; desidiosus erat.

Mephibosheth brought to David's Court.—The family of Saul, although still very rich, had fallen so low that there was room for David's generosity towards it, and when firmly established on the throne he would have been guilty of an ingratitude of which his nature was incapable had he forgotten his friend

Jonathan and the promise made to him. One son of that prince survived, Merib-baal, or Mephibosheth, who had been lamed when an infant by an accident to his nurse, as she escaped after the battle of Gilboa. He was living under the protection of a wealthy man named Machir, at a small place, Lo-debar, across the Jordan, near Mahanaim. Apparently his property had been confiscated. David had his lands restored to him, brought him to Jerusalem, and gave him a place at his own table among the king's sons. Ziba was commissioned to administer his property.

Court Festivals at Jerusalem.—This was no doubt a politic as well as a generous measure. We more than once get a glimpse of the interior of the Millo Palace, a vast house where hospitality was freely dispensed at the cost of the king. There were often entertainments, more or less festivals, in which singing men and singing women performed before the great court officials and guests to whom the king wished to show favour. Wine flowed freely, especially on occasions graced by the royal presence, and an officer home with despatches on leave might get drunk without remark. He could not refuse cups of wine when pledged by the king.

Fate of Uriah the Hittite.—So Uriah the Hittite, one of those foreign captains of whom David had many in his service, was entertained. David had sent for him from the camp before Rabbah, to try to conceal the consequences of his adulterous intercourse with the beautiful Bathsheba, Uriah's wife, of whom the king had become suddenly enamoured. But the soldier, who thought it shameful to enjoy the comforts of home-life while his comrades were risking their lives, retained his sense of duty even when intoxicated. Then, like Prætus, David sent his victim away with a letter containing his own sentence of death, and, more unhappy than Bellerophon, Uriah went to meet his doom. Set in the forefront of the hottest battle, he fell, happy indeed in this, that he was ignorant of his wife's dishonour. She showed no shame or remorse, and after the customary mourning became David's wife.

“Thus far the story belongs to the usual crimes of an Oriental despot. Detestable as was its double guilt, we must still remember that David was not an Alfred or a St. Louis. He was an Eastern king, exposed to all the temptations of a Sultan of Bagdad or Constantinople. What follows, however, could

have been found nowhere in the ancient world but in the Jewish monarchy.

Nathan's Parable.—"A year had passed ; the dead Uriah was forgotten ; the child of guilt was born in the royal house, and loved with all the passionate tenderness of David's paternal heart. Suddenly the prophet Nathan appears before him. He comes, in the true mission of the prophets, as a champion of the oppressed, to claim redress for a wrong in humble life."¹ He aroused the sense of outraged justice in the king by the parable of the rich man and the ewe lamb, and showed him his own meanness and selfishness. The instant recognition of his guilt breaks up the illusion of months. *As Jehovah liveth, the man that hath done this is worthy to die: and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.* So David exclaimed in his indignation against the imaginary tyrant of the story. *Thou art the man,* said the prophet. And David felt it. *I have sinned against Jehovah.*

Remorse of David.—Though we may no longer use Psalm li. as an authentic expression of this great repentance, we cannot doubt of its reality. In the history we see that it was no formal confession, no momentary remorse. It was a change of life. The original character regains its old ascendancy. The *free spirit* and the *clean heart* come back. The passionate grief at the death of Bathsheba's child, the fasting and seclusion, the sudden revulsion of thought, when prayer proves unavailing, and the exclamation, *Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me,* are proofs that through all his lapses into savage cruelty and reckless self-indulgence, there still remained in David a fountain of feeling fresh and pure as when he fed his father's flock and won the love of Jonathan.

Birth of Solomon.—But though he could repent and rally after loss, though the birth of Solomon, or, as the prophet called him, Jedidiah, "Jehovah's David or Beloved," was as auspicious as if nothing had occurred to trouble the victorious return from the conquest of Ammon, the clouds from this time gathered over David's fortunes, and henceforward, as Nathan had predicted, the sword never departed from his house. The crime itself had sprung from the lawless and licentious polygamy

¹ Stanley, *Jewish Church*, Lect. xxiv. vol. ii. 109, 110.

which this king had been the first to introduce, and out of the polygamy sprang the terrible retribution.

David's Family.—The royal harem was, as we have seen, extensive. We get a glimpse of the domestic life of the families of several of the wives. They appear to have had establishments in or near the palace. There are princes and princesses living on terms of intimacy with their cousins, but more or less in rivalry with half-brothers and sisters. Each prince had his royal mule. The princesses were distinguished by the brilliant colours of their robes, or their long sleeves (2 Sam. xiii. 29 (18 marg.)).

The eldest of the princes was Amnon the son of Ahinoam, whom the king cherished as his heir. His intimate friend in the family was his cousin Jonadab. This was one group in the royal circle. Another consisted of the two children of Maacah the princess of Geshur, Absalom and his sister Tamar, both famed for beauty.

Absalom and Tamar.—Absalom was especially in this respect the very flower and pride of the whole nation, the magnificence of his hair being something truly wonderful. Tamar was as graceful as the palm tree which gave her her name. She was accomplished, too, in such things as baking cakes, like the princesses of the *Arabian Nights*.

The Slaying of Amnon and Flight of Absalom.—Amnon's unhappy passion for this beautiful sister and his cruel treatment of her were like the breaking of a cloud of ruin over the house of David. He was either unwilling or unable to punish the heir to his throne, "and on Absalom devolved, according to Eastern notions, the dreadful duty, the frightful pleasure, of avenging his sister's wrong. All the princes were invited by him to a pastoral festival at his country house, and there Amnon was slain. There was a general alarm. The other princes rushed to their mules and galloped back to Jerusalem. The exaggerated news had already reached their father, that all had perished." Jonadab reassured him. Still the truth was dark enough, and there was a general mourning at the court. Absalom fled beyond the limits of Palestine to his grandfather's court at Geshur. He remained there three years, and David's grief for Amnon's death gradually changed to sorrow for the absence of his favourite son.

Absalom restored to Favour.—Joab perceived that only an

excuse was needed for him to recall the culprit. An indirect appeal was always most effective with David, and by interesting him in an imaginary case Joab contrived the prince's return. *So Joab arose and went to Geshur, and brought Absalom to Jerusalem. And the king said, Let him turn to his own house, but let him not see my face. So Absalom turned to his own house, and saw not the king's face.*

This state of things lasted two years, and then Absalom forced Joab to intercede for his complete restoration to favour.

His ambitious Schemes.—The reconciliation was sincere on David's part, but not on that of the prince. He now found himself virtually chief among the royal children, and he became ambitious for the crown itself. He surrounded himself with a numerous retinue, and introduced the innovation of mounted guards. *Absalom prepared him chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him.* He courted popularity by constantly appearing at the royal seat of judgment in the gateway of Jerusalem, and speaking to suitors in depreciatory terms of the present administration of justice, insinuating he would do better if he were in power. When petitioners were for paying him homage, he would take them by the hand and kiss them. Shakespeare's description of Bolingbroke's behaviour describes that of Absalom—

How he did seem to dive into their hearts
With humble and familiar courtesy;
What reverence he did throw away on slaves,
 Wooing poor craftsmen with the craft of smiles.

Disaffection in Judah.—How long this went on we do not know. The forty years of the narrative are, as usual, only a formula for an indefinite period. But there is little doubt that David was in his declining years, and that this fact was taken into account by Absalom. But there were other signs to favour his enterprise. The long reign of David excited a great deal of smouldering impatience. The tribe of Judah, which had raised him to the throne, must have shown signs of disaffection, or Absalom would never have chosen Hebron as the place in which to raise the standard of revolt. Possibly the favours lavished on members of the Northern tribes offended them. Perhaps, too, they were disgusted by the reliance which the king placed on his foreign mercenaries. There were other

troubles too. The family of Saul, remnant as it was, was a source of agitation. And in the immediate circle round the king there were jealousies and suspicions. Amasa, son of Abigail the sister of Zeruiah, was at daggers drawn with Joab. Ahithophel of Giloh, near Hebron, was infected with the spirit prevailing there, and he was a dangerous man.

David was blind to it all ; and Joab, if he had his suspicions, did not, for reasons probably of his own, mention them.

Absalom's Revolt.—Seeing matters were ripe, Absalom pretended that he had made a vow, which he could only perform at Hebron, the ancient sanctuary and his own birthplace, and David allowed him to depart thither. These vows of royal personages, which entailed the slaughter of an enormous number of animals, were gigantic pleasure parties, to which numerous friends were invited. That two hundred accompanied the prince therefore aroused no suspicion, and it was not till a messenger rushed into the palace with the news that Absalom had actually been proclaimed king to the sound of the trumpet, *and that the hearts of the men of Israel were after the usurper*, that David took the alarm. But now it was too late for any measure of defence. Safety lay only in flight.

LXVI. FLIGHT OF DAVID AND HIS RESTORATION

2 SAM. xv. 14–xix. 1–41.

Lord, how are mine adversaries increased !
 Many are they that rise up against me.
 Many there be that say of my soul,
 There is no help for him in God.
 But thou, O Lord, art a shield about me ;
 My glory and the lifter up of mine head.
 I cry unto the Lord with my voice,
 And he answereth me out of His holy hill.
 I laid me down and slept—
 I awaked, for the Lord sustained me.
 I will not be afraid for ten thousands of the people,
 That have set themselves against me round about.

The Day of the Flight.—It was apparently early in the morning, after he had heard the news of the rebellion, that the king left Jerusalem. “There is no single day in the Jewish history of which so elaborate an account remains as of this

memorable flight. There is none that combines so many of David's characteristics": his patience, his humble trust, his generosity, his astute diplomacy. We miss only his daring courage. But he was an old man now.¹

"Every stage of the mournful procession was marked by some peculiar incident." It was an exodus of all the court. Only the inferior women of the harem remained behind, to keep the house. All were on foot. They left the city by what is now St. Stephen's Gate. The first halt, apparently to form the procession, was at the Far-House just outside the city. The Philistine bodyguard took the lead. Then came the faithful six hundred Gittites. David magnanimously wished Ittai, their commander, to go back and make terms with Absalom, but he refused to worship the rising sun. David accepted his faithful service, and the king and his officer moved on together amid a loud wail, for *all the country wept with a loud voice* as the fugitives crossed the Kidron and began the ascent over Mount Olivet.

The Ark left at Jerusalem. — Then occurred a touching scene.² Zadok, Abiathar, and the Levites, bearing the ark, were seen approaching, with the apparent intention of accompanying the king. The ark was placed on the ground till all the people had defiled past it. But the superstition of an earlier time had been outgrown. David would not use the sacred chest as a charm, nor risk it in his personal peril. He ordered the priests to return with it to Jerusalem. There, too, they could be of more service to him by sending him news by their sons Ahimaaz and Jonathan.

News of Ahithophel's Treason. — Another burst of wild lament broke out as the procession turned up the mountain pathway, the king leading the dirge as he moved on, barefooted and with his head wrapped in his mantle. It was at this juncture that David was told of Ahithophel's treason, and this was the greatest blow of all to him, for Ahithophel had a reputation for extraordinary wisdom, and was consulted *as if a man inquired at the oracle of God*. But at a sacred spot at the top of the hill Hushai the Archite came to meet him, with his coat rent and earth upon his head. To frustrate the designs of Ahithophel, David sent him back to Jerusalem, where he arrived just in time to meet Absalom.

¹ Stanley, *Jewish Church*, Lect. xxiv. vol. ii. 117, 118.

² Renan, *History of the People of Israel*, bk. iii. ch. vii.

Ziba's Deceit.—A little past the top of the hill the cortege was met by Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth, bringing a welcome present of provisions. His master, he said, was staying in Jerusalem to watch events, in hope of a turn in favour of the fortunes of the house of Saul. David listened, perhaps too easily, to these insinuations, and conferred on Ziba all his master's possessions.

Shimei curses David.—The road down the slope of Olivet passed through property owned by the family of Saul, some of whom took this opportunity to give vent to the rancour which they had been dissimulating for thirty years. At the village of Bahurim, Shimei ben Gera heaped curses on the aged king and pelted him with stones, as he ran along the edge of a ravine which separated him from the melancholy procession. *Abishai* would have rushed across to take off the head of this *deal dog*, as he called him, but David checked him. He even seemed to find some strange comfort in this violent abuse from an avowed enemy after the shock of the rebellion of his favourite son. *Let him alone, and let him curse ; for Jehovah hath bidden him. It may be that Jehovah will look on mine affliction : that Jehovah will requite me good for his cursing this day.* The exiles passed on to the Jordan valley, and there halted for the refreshment they so much needed, and for news from Jerusalem.

Absalom at Jerusalem—Hushai's Wiles.—Absalom had entered that city soon after David's departure, and immediately, on Ahithophel's advice, gave public proof that he had assumed the throne, by seizing the royal harem. The wily statesman then counselled immediate pursuit of the fugitive monarch, but Hushai, who had presented himself at the council, and set aside Absalom's suspicions by ardent professions of attachment to him, urged the danger of a too hasty attack on such an experienced warrior, surrounded as he was by *gibborim*, proved in many a fight, and now driven to bay like a bear robbed of her whelps. Besides, was David, who had for long years baffled Saul's pursuit, likely to allow himself to be caught in the open? *Behold, he is hid now in some pit or in some other place.* All Israel must be mustered for a battle with David, and Absalom must be himself at its head.

Suicide of Ahithophel.—This advice was thought to be wiser than Ahithophel's plan, and Zadok despatched Jonathan and Ahimaaz to convey the news of its acceptance to David. They

were hiding by En-rogel, the Fuller's Spring (afterwards the Spring of the Virgin), the fountain just outside the walls, from which the conduit led which supplied the city. A maid, coming as if for water, gave them the message, which, after a romantic adventure, they succeeded in taking to David, who, with all his people, at once crossed the river. As for Ahithophel, disgusted that his advice was not taken, he went home to Giloh, set his affairs in order, and hanged himself. He knew that Absalom must now fail, and that there was no hope of pardon for him.

David at Mahanaim.—With the close of that eventful day a cloud rests on the subsequent history of the rebellion. For three months longer it seems to have lasted. David was secure in the fortress of Mahanaim, where he was treated with much attention and respect. Provisions, including many delicacies, were sent him by Shobi ben Nahash from Rabbah, by Machir ben Ammiel, Mephibosheth's former protector, from Lo-debar, and by the aged Gileadite Barzillai. *For they said, The people is hungry and weary and thirsty in the wilderness.*

Absalom marches against David.—Absalom did not wait longer than necessary to cross the Jordan with the army he had levied. He put at its head Amasa, his cousin. Joab and he were to prove which was the greatest soldier on a pitched field.

But the ordering of the war was not left to Joab. David recovered for the occasion all his strategical skill. He divided his force into three brigades, under Joab, Abishai, and Ittai the Gittite. He wished also to take the supreme command himself, but was overruled. *Thou shalt not go forth : for if we flee away, they will not care for us ; neither if half of us die, will they care for us : but thou art worth ten thousand of us : therefore now it is better that thou be ready to succour us out of the city.* He remained, therefore, with the reserves, enjoining his captains to do all they could to spare the life of Absalom.

David's Victory.—The combat took place in what was called the forest of Ephraim, a tract of wooded country to the north-west of Mahanaim. The victory of David's generals was complete. Twenty thousand of Israel are said to have fallen. Forest-fighting, familiar perhaps to David's veterans from his Ammonite wars, seems to have been fatal to Absalom's army. *The forest devoured more people that day than the sword devoured.*

Death of Absalom.—Absalom, riding on his mule at full speed, suddenly met a detachment of David's army, and, plunging into the thick of the wood to escape them, was caught by the head—possibly by his long hair—in a great terebinth, and was left suspended. None of the ordinary soldiers ventured to touch the hapless prince, but Joab, determining to rid his master of a danger, slew him with his own hand.

Absalom's body was buried in a pit beneath a cairn. Another monument at the gate of Jerusalem, in the valley of Kidron, long bore his name. It was a pillar he had, long before his rebellion, erected to perpetuate his memory, since he had no issue.

David's cry, "O Absalom, my son, my son!" when he heard the news, tells of the deep grief of that affectionate heart.

The Restoration.—But Joab saw that the mourning, if prolonged, would undo all the results of his own act in slaying the prince. The king reluctantly yielded to his representations, and, showing himself in public, took steps for his return. He sent to Jerusalem to invoke the sympathy of his native tribe. He came down from the eastern hills to the banks of the Jordan. A ferry-boat was in readiness for the passage. As it went to and fro it brought over many, anxious to make their peace with the restored monarch. Foremost among them was Shimei, who, in spite of the vehement remonstrances of Abishai, received a promise of protection. Next came the unfortunate Mephibosheth, squalid with all the Oriental signs of grief, protesting his innocence and accusing Ziba of deceiving him. "By the judgment, fair or unfair, between the two, was concluded the amnesty with the house of Saul." Then the king himself crossed the river, after taking a reluctant farewell of the kind old Barzillai, whom he in vain invited to his court. Chimham, the son, was taken in his place, and, with his descendants, long remained in Western Palestine, a witness of the loyalty of the Eastern tribe. On the other side of the river stood in order the chiefs of Judah, summoned by Zadok and Abiathar, to welcome back their rightful prince. "With them the king entered his capital, and the restoration of David was accomplished."

LXVII. FAMINE, PESTILENCE, OLD AGE,
AND DEATH

2 SAM. xix. 41-xxiv. ; 1 KINGS ii. 1-10 ; 1 CHRON. xxi.

I will say of Jehovah, He is my refuge and my fortress ;
My God in whom I trust.
For He shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler
And from the noisome pestilence.

Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night,
Nor for the arrow that flieth by day :
For the pestilence that walketh in darkness,
Nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday.

He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him ;
I will be with him in trouble :
I will deliver him and honour him.
With long life will I satisfy him,
And show him My salvation.

Jealousy of the Northern Tribes towards Judah.—But the restoration was not accomplished without an incident of great and perilous significance. It was apparently in the Jordan valley, possibly at Gilgal, that the formal welcome to the returning monarch was accorded. Now Ephraim and the Northern tribes had taken no part in Absalom's rebellion. ¹“The conflict was perhaps in their eyes only a domestic quarrel. But the eagerness of the men of Judah to re-establish the king whom they had themselves deposed gave them great offence. It was as if the Parisians, after having driven out Charles x. in July 1830, had taken it on themselves to restore him without consulting the country. There were loud complaints that Judah arranged everything according to its own capricious fancy. *We have ten parts in the king*, said the malcontents, *and we have also more right to David than ye.*”

Jealousy expresses itself in many ways. This protestation meant really that the Northern tribes were already preparing to separate from Judah. The cleavage between North and South was always showing itself. Sheba ben Bichri spoke the true feeling when he blew the trumpet and cried, *We have no portion in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse : every*

¹ Renan, *History of the People of Israel*, bk. iii. ch. vii.

man to his tents, O Israel. The men of Judah alone clave to David, and escorted him home to Jerusalem.

Amasa and Joab.—Prompt measures were necessary, or the dissolution of the kingdom which had been so laboriously founded might have been anticipated by forty years. The situation was awkward. Joab had been degraded from the chief command for slaying Absalom, and Amasa put in his place. But Amasa's old troops were Northerners who had followed Sheba. He was, however, ordered to muster the Judahite forces, but the attempt to mobilise them appears to have been but a partial success. For Joab was commissioned to put himself at the head of the Foreign Guard and the *Gibborim*, and go to reduce Sheba.

Murder of Amasa—Defeat of Sheba.—His opportunity was come. Marching at once, he overtook Amasa at Gibeon, and as he hastened towards him, let his sword fall from its sheath. He did not stop to pick it up, and Amasa saw him coming, apparently unarmed. But Joab held another sword or dagger in his left hand, under his cloak, and as he gave a friendly greeting, he took Amasa by the beard with his right hand to kiss him, and with the other stabbed him, as he had stabbed Abner, in the side. Once more supreme in the army, Joab chased Sheba to the extreme north, to Abel of Beth-Maacah, which had at first received him and his forces; but the inhabitants, rather than submit to a siege, beheaded the rebel, and threw his head to Joab over the wall. Had Amasa lived and found himself again at the head of a Northern army, things might have been far different.

The trouble of war was now over for David, but there were other clouds to darken his declining years. The last three chapters of the Book of Samuel are a series of appendices. Two of these tell of David's heroes and their exploits,—veritable romances of war. Two others contain poetical compositions, one of them nearly identical with Psalm xviii., the other a dirge—the last words of David. But there are also two narratives—the one of famine, the other of pestilence.

The Famine—Rizpah and her Sons.—The famine must belong to the early part of the reign over all Israel. Like all natural calamities, it was reckoned a judgment from Jehovah for some sin. *And David sought the face of Jehovah. And Jehovah said, It is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because*

he put to death the Gibeonites. Asked what atonement they would take, the Gibeonites replied that they must have seven sons of their former persecutor to offer to Jehovah. *And the king said, I will give them.* Passing over Mephibosheth for Jonathan's sake, he took the two sons of Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, and the five sons of Merab, who had apparently been brought up by Michal. The horror of this is only relieved by the beautiful devotion of Rizpah. *They fell all seven together : and they were put to death in the days of harvest, in the first days, at the beginning of barley-harvest. And Rizpah the daughter of Aiah took sackcloth, and spread it for her upon the rock, from the beginning of harvest until water was poured upon them from heaven ; and she suffered neither the birds of the air to rest on them by day, nor the beasts of the field by night.*

The Census and the Pestilence.—The pestilence is described as a judgment for a sin of David himself, but the account is attended with difficulties. The king determined to take a census of his people. The early feeling, when men were not yet able to learn what the Apostle James taught, that *God tempteth no man*, ascribed the suggestion as coming directly from above. The Chronicler found himself obliged to ascribe it to Satan. But where its sinfulness lay it is hard to see. There are as many as eight instances of census-taking actually recorded in the Bible, and four more implied, and on no other occasion than this was any voice raised in remonstrance, or any suggestion of sinfulness made. Josephus, with Ex. xxx. 12 in his mind, says : “David made the people be numbered without exacting for the sanctuary the half-shekel of poll-tax enjoined by the Mosaic law.” But there is no evidence for this, even if the poll-tax were in existence in the time of David. Had this man, who never from the first was elated by his achievements, and from his shepherd adventures to the last had attributed all his glory to God, suddenly become proud of the numbers of his fighting men ? Or was he, with dreams of wide conquest, contemplating a general conscription ? It was most natural that a correct census should be taken, for the benefit of his successor. Joab, however, was suspicious of the measure, and tried to dissuade his master from it. But David was obstinate, and the census was taken. *And there were in Israel eight hundred thousand valiant men that drew the sword, and the men of Judah were five hundred thousand men.*

Gad denounces David.—It was the prophet Gad who became in this instance the mouthpiece of rebuke. A choice of three punishments was offered: seven (Gr. *three*) years of famine, three months of disastrous war, or three days of pestilence. David chose the last. *Let us fall now into the hands of Jehovah: for His mercies are great: and let me not fall into the hand of man.* A tremendous pestilence—a death, as it is expressly termed in the Greek, like the Black Death of the Middle Ages—ensued.

The plague raged through the country for three days, and at last approached Jerusalem. The capital seemed doomed to destruction.

The Vision at the Threshing-floor of Araunah.¹—“It is here that, through the many variations of the two narratives which record the event, and athwart their figurative language, a scene emerges which has left its trace on the history of Jerusalem even to the present day.” Immediately outside the eastern walls of the city was a threshing-floor belonging to a chief of the conquered race of Jebus. *And Gad came that day to David, and said unto him, Go up, rear an altar unto the Lord in the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite.* The Jebusite and his sons were threshing at the very moment when the king appeared, and saw the vision of the angel of Jehovah with his hand outstretched over the devoted city. Such a vision is described in the later days of Jerusalem, in the pestilence of Rome under Gregory the Great, and in our own Plague of London. It marked the spot for the consecration of an altar. David bought the site from Araunah (or Ornan—there are more variants of the name); and the altar was built where, a few years later, Solomon erected the Temple.

Renewed Household Intrigues.—Intrigues of the harem embittered the closing years of David. Since the death of Amnon and Absalom, the question of succession was the subject of the greatest anxiety in the establishments of the various queens. Prophetic anticipation coincided with David's own wishes and the ambition of Bathsheba, in regarding her son Solomon as successor. But there was another prince older than Solomon, and one whose beauty and manners had made him almost as popular as Absalom had been. This was Adonijah the son of Haggith. Like Absalom, he made a fine

¹ Stanley, *Jewish Church*, Lect. XXIV. vol. ii. 133.

display. Adonijah had a chariot and horsemen and footmen, who cleared the way before him, and he said, *I will be king*. David's indulgence encouraged the prince, and gave a kind of sanction to his hopes with the public. And at length he determined not to wait for his father's death, but to get himself immediately proclaimed. What hidden springs were at work in court and harem we do not know, or can only from vague hints conjecture, but that Adonijah succeeded in gaining Joab and Zadok to his cause is significant.

Treason of Adonijah.—A grand festival in the gardens south of Jerusalem, near the junction of the two valleys, was the excuse for assembling his adherents. Adonijah invited all his brothers except Solomon, and the men of Judah, including the royal guard; but he invited neither Benaiah, nor Nathan, nor the *Gibborim*. People were already shouting, *God save king Adonijah!*

Solomon proclaimed King.—But Nathan and Bathsheba had their eyes open. By a counter stroke of policy they procured the proclamation of Solomon.

Last Words and Death of David.—We do not know how long David survived this partial abdication. Two versions of his last words are extant. One of these is in poetic form; and though its obscurities are many, it expresses at once the light and shade, the strength and weakness, of his whole reign and character.

*The God of Israel said,
The Rock of Israel spake to me :
One that ruleth over men righteously,
That ruleth in the fear of God,
He shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun ariseth,
A morning without clouds ;
When the tender grass springeth out of the earth,
Through clear shining after rain.
Verily my house is not so with God ;
Yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant,
Ordered in all things and sure ;
For it is all my salvation and all my desire,
Although He maketh it not to grow.*

The other is in the form of dying counsel to Solomon, and here too he displays the dark as well as the bright side of his character. We see him, indeed, grateful for past services. He recommended to Solomon's care Chimham and his children.

But in the same breath he bequeathed to his successor a dark legacy of long-cherished but dissembled vengeance, like that which was found in the hands of the dead Constantine, against Joab and Shimei.¹ It was well, no doubt, to put the young prince on his guard against men who had shown themselves capable of treason, or were known to be hostile to his dynasty, but we wish David could, in this instance, have forgotten policy.

Character of David.—David was about seventy years old when he died, *in a good old age, full of days, riches, and honour*. He had reigned seven years at Hebron and thirty-three years at Jerusalem. There, just south of the City of David, excavations may yet discover his tomb.

It was about 1000 B.C. This must be borne in mind in endeavouring to represent a character so complex. Religion had yet to wait two centuries of progress till it should possess ideas of the nature of God as pure and sublime as those the prophetic books display. At present Jehovah, even in the minds of men like David, was but the God of Israel, and the conception of His justice and interest in human affairs was limited to what was of advantage to Israel, and in Israel to those who were His servants. But within these limits there can be no question of the sincerity or depth of David's piety. Even without appealing to the Psalms, we may leave him his place among the saints of the Old Dispensation. *In all his works he praised the Holy One most high with words of glory; with his whole heart he sung songs, and loved Him that made him* (Ecclus. xlvii. 8). He was a man *after the heart* of the God of his conception, if he was not before his age either in religion or in morality. And if not a saintly character in the later acceptance of the term, he was a heroic character. He was brave and generous, he could be tender and true, he was a romantic friend, a chivalrous leader, a devoted father. Even in his worst deeds we feel that we must always forgive him. The fascination which he exercised over his time lives still. He after all deserved to be what he became, the ideal king of Israel, not only because, born sovereign that he was, he founded a dynasty that lasted while Jewish monarchy lasted, but because the fair elements of his character far outweighed the less noble; and though he was both weak where his affections were

¹ Stanley, *Jewish Church*, Lect. xxiv. vol. ii. 135.

engaged, and vindictive where his animosity was aroused, yet he loved righteousness, and established order, and his reign was a reign if not of peace, yet of justice and right.

LXVIII. SOLOMON IN HIS GLORY

1 KINGS i. 32-iv.; 2 CHRON. i. ; ECCLES. ii. 4-9 ; ECCLUS. xlvii. 12-18.

Who is this that cometh up out of the wilderness like pillars
of smoke,
Perfumed with myrrh and frankincense,
With all powders of the merchant ?
Behold, it is the litter of Solomon :
Threescore mighty men are about it,
Of the mighty men of Israel.
They all handle the sword and are expert in war ;
Every man hath his sword upon his thigh,
Because of fear in the night.
King Solomon made himself a palanquin
Of the wood of Lebanon.
He made the pillars thereof of silver,
The bottom thereof of gold, the seat of it of purple,
The midst thereof being paved with love
From the daughters of Jerusalem.
Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon,
With the crown wherewith his mother hath crowned him on the
day of his espousals,
And in the day of the gladness of his heart.

Consider the lilies of the field how they grow :
They toil not, neither do they spin ;
Yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory
Was not arrayed like one of these.

SOLOMON. *About 1000 B.C. Reigned forty years.*

Solomon was the second son of David and Bathsheba his favourite wife. There is something more than usually significant in his names. His first name, Jedidiah, "beloved by Jehovah," is an amplification of his father's name, "Darling," and becomes "Jehovah's darling." That by which he was known as king is Shelomoh, "the Peaceful"; in the LXX, Σαλωμών; in the New Testament, Σολομών. It corresponds to the German

Friedlich, and was given to contrast his destiny with that of David. The Chronicler makes David tell his son that his birth had been predicted at the time when, after the capture of Jerusalem, he had first meditated the building of the Temple. *Behold, a son shall be born to thee, who shall be a man of rest ; and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about : for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his day. He shall build an house for My name ; and he shall be My son, and I will be his Father ; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel for ever.*

Influence of Bathsheba.—Bathsheba was a woman of great intelligence. In her husband's reign his overmastering affection for her and the preference he showed for her son must have given her great influence ; she now occupied the position known in Oriental courts as that of *Sultane-Validé*, or Queen-Mother. The poets sang how she had crowned her son with her own hand. When she entered his presence the king rose and, with a deep bow, seated her on his right hand on a throne like his own. In fact, he owed his throne to the quickness with which, on Nathan's representation, she had realised the situation, and the promptness with which she had acted on it. Adonijah made a great mistake when he asked her to intercede with Solomon for him. Her preponderating influence was doubtless on the side of those measures so odious to us, but carrying so little reproach according to Eastern customs, by which the young king made away with those likely to give him trouble.

Execution of Adonijah.—Adonijah was the first victim. He was madly in love with the beautiful Shunamite Abishag, whose presence had comforted David's age. She would have completely consoled him for the loss of the kingdom. But, as we saw in the case of Abner, to ask a wife out of the royal harem was to be suspected of high treason. He hoped the Queen-Mother's interference would disarm his request of suspicion, and secure its favourable reception. Bathsheba carried it to Solomon, but said not a word in the poor prince's behalf ; and Solomon grew so angry that he swore by Jehovah that his brother should be put to death, and immediately sent Benaiah to execute the sentence.

Banishment of Abiathar—Zadok sole Priest.—Abiathar, David's priest, had been shortsighted enough to conspire with

Adonijah. He barely escaped his fate. Get thee, said the king, *to Anathoth, unto thine own fields; for thou art worthy of death: but I will not at this time put thee to death, because thou barest the ark of the Lord Jehovah before David my father, and because thou wast afflicted in all wherein my father was afflicted.* The historian saw in this a fulfilment of the doom pronounced on the house of Eli. Zadok became Solomon's sole priest, the first *cohen* of the Temple, in which his posterity officiated till 167 B.C., passing on his name, if not his office, to the Sadducees.

Execution of Joab and Shimei.—For these severe measures Solomon had not, as in the case of Joab and Shimei, a father's command. David, more than Solomon, must bear the guilt of putting these two old men to death. According to the strange sentiment of the time, the son, in obeying the farewell injunction of his father, could think he was cleansing him from the stain of the blood of Abner and Amasa, who had fallen by Joab's hand—so much to the advantage, indeed, of David, but without his consent. He did not scruple to violate sanctuary to effect this. The old warrior had fled to Gibeon as soon as he heard of Solomon's coronation, and had taken hold of the horns of the altar. But Benaiah was ordered to despatch him there, and the chief command of the army now passed into his hands. Shimei might have escaped a violent end could he have brooked the confinement to Jerusalem which Solomon imposed on him. But an accident—the pursuit of a runaway slave—took him outside the walls, and the king eagerly seized on this literal violation of his order to send *his hoar head down to the grave with blood.*

Solomon's Rule.—Beyond these executions, which were considered necessary both on religious and on political grounds, there is nothing attributed to Solomon to indicate that he was anything but of a good-natured and tolerant disposition. From all the expressions used of him he must have been young at the time of his accession, perhaps just under twenty. The chronology is still too uncertain to allow of more than an approximation to the date of the commencement of his reign. But it was about 1000 B.C.

His Religious Attitude.—At first Solomon was a sincere worshipper of Jehovah. Though he ranks in history chiefly as a secular monarch, doing nothing save building the Temple to

maintain the religious vocation, which was the true vocation of Israel, yet he had a religious bent, as even his idolatries prove. Three times he was visited by prophetic dreams.

His Vision and Choice.—The first of these was at Gibeon, at that time the high place held in greatest esteem. He had gone there to offer sacrifice on his accession. In this vision was offered to him on the threshold of life the choice so often imagined in fiction, actually offered to all youth in real life. *Ask what I shall give thee.* The answer is the ideal answer of such a prince, burdened with the heavy responsibility of his position. *Give Thy servant an understanding heart to judge Thy people, that I may discern between good and evil ; for who is able to judge this Thy great people ?* And God gave him *kokhma* (a word usually translated “wisdom”), that is, political ability, the art of governing well, of understanding men and things, the judicial faculty. *And Solomon awoke, and, behold, it was a dream.* But the fulfilment of it belonged to real life, and the case of the disputed right to the child is doubtless only one of many cases which might have been told of the discernment with which the young king solved difficult questions and decided between rival claims.

Splendour of his Reign.—But more than the bare answer to the request was promised. *I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honour, so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days.* The epithet appropriate to Solomon’s reign is *splendour*. It was almost barren of events.

Edom Independent—The new Kingdom of Syria.—Except at two points on his frontier, it was a time of peace. In Edom, Hadad succeeded in establishing something like independence ; and in Syria, Rezon ben Eliadab, an Aramæan warrior who, after Hadadezer’s defeat by David, had rallied the fugitives, not only maintained a successful war against Solomon during the whole of his reign, but was able to make Damascus the capital and seat of a new kingdom.

Peace and Commercial Prosperity.—“Neither Judah nor any of the other tribes saw, for a period of about forty years, the face of a single enemy.”¹ It was not then by spoils of war that Solomon became rich ; yet his was literally an age of gold, at least at Jerusalem, where that metal shone so abundantly that silver

¹ Renan, *History of the People of Israel*, bk. iii. ch. x.

in comparison *was nothing accounted of*. But Israel at this epoch formed relations, commercial and political, with other nations, and drew to her all that they had to give or sell of what was choice and valuable.

Alliance with Egypt—Capture of Gezer.—An alliance with Egypt was the first step of the new policy dictated by the fact that Israel had taken its place among Oriental empires. *And Solomon made affinity with Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and took Pharaoh's daughter, and brought her into the city of David.* About a century before Solomon's accession the throne of the Ramessides had been usurped by the hierarchs of Tanis, the ancient Zan or Zoan. This dynasty, the twenty-first, came to an end about 980 B.C., and it must have been one of its later kings who was the Pharaoh that, no doubt with the help of the Philistines, took Gezer, a Canaanite town on the southwestern frontier of Palestine, which had hitherto resisted the arms of all the Israelite chiefs from Joshua down to David, but which now became an appanage of Solomon, as the dowry of the Egyptian Princess.

Influence of Egypt.¹—Besides the indirect influence which this connection exercised upon the architecture, the manners, the literature, and the religion of Israel, it led at once to an intercourse which would have been inconceivable to the Hebrews, who, standing on the shores of the Red Sea, seemed to have parted with the Egyptians for ever. Horses and chariots, only seldom seen in Jerusalem before, were now introduced as regular articles of commerce from Egypt. Stables were established on an enormous scale. The traffic between the two countries made *caravanserais* or inns necessary, and it is possible that the one at Bethlehem, known in Jeremiah's day as the caravanserai of Chimham, and sacred to Christians as the scene of the Nativity, may date from Solomon's reign.

Alliance with Tyre.—The relations of Solomon with Tyre exercised a still more civilising influence. That city, recently separated from Zidon, was then at the zenith of its activity. Its king, Hiram, had been the friend of David. He was a still faster friend of Solomon. A correspondence passed between the monarchs, and two of the letters have been preserved. They set one another riddles to guess. It was Hiram who supplied the Israelite king with artists and materials for his building

¹ Stanley, *Jewish Church*, Lect. XXVI. vol. ii. 181.

purposes, receiving in exchange wheat and oil. *So Hiram gave Solomon timber of cedar and timber of fir, according to all his desire. And Solomon gave Hiram twenty thousand measures of wheat for food to his household, and twenty measures of pure oil; thus gave Solomon to Hiram year by year.* The Chronicler's figures are different, and Hebrew measures are very obscure, but the word used here is generally taken to be equal to 8 English bushels. A district of Galilee, adjoining Tyre, was also made over to the Phœnician monarch, though the name he gave it, *Cabul*, probably conveyed to Phœnician ears the fact that Hiram was not too well pleased with the present. There is no Hebrew word that gives a satisfactory explanation.

Solomon's Fleet—Commercial Expansion.—Tyre also sent Solomon sailors for the fleet which he established at Ezion-Geber on the Gulf of Akabah. David's conquest of Edom had given Israel the command of the Arabah, and Hadad had not succeeded in depriving Solomon of it. The nautical experience of the Tyrians was invaluable to a people never partial to the sea, and Hiram sent shipbuilders to Solomon's port and helped to man his ships when they were built. It looks as if trading privileges were interchanged. Hiram's ships brought commodities for Israel from Tarshish (Tartessus in Spain) and other Mediterranean ports. The two established a commerce by means of Solomon's navy with Ophir, that is, either Arabia or Western India, perhaps the coast of Malabar. The vessels of either fleet seem to have got the name *ships of Tarshish*. The articles brought thus to Jerusalem were gold and silver, almug,—that is, sandal wood,—ivory, aloes, cassia, cinnamon, apes, and peacocks. The Sanskrit names which many of these articles bear, point to India as the source whence they were procured.

System of Supplies for the Court.—The royal household was maintained on a most lavish scale. The whole country was divided into twelve districts, not at all conterminous with the old tribal districts, and an officer set over each, whose duty it was to purvey provisions for the palace. Thus each district furnished supplies for a month. The names of seven of these officers are given and the amount of provision for one day, *thirty measures of fine flour* (about 240 bushels), *sixty measures of meal, ten fat oxen, and twenty oxen out of the pastures, and one hundred sheep, besides harts, and gazelles, and roebucks, and fatted fowl.* This luxurious plenty was also shared by the

people generally. *Judah and Israel were many as the sand which is by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking and making merry. And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his figtree, from Dan even to Beersheba all the days of Solomon.* On this side of the picture all is peace and prosperity.

Heavy Taxation—Luxury and Moral Decline.—But there is another side. As we shall see, this luxury and splendour meant, for a large part of the population, heavy taxation and exactions, both in labour and money, of a cruel kind. And luxury brought, as usual, a sad decline in morality. The king had an immense harem, seven hundred wives, called princesses, and three hundred concubines, slaves who had been bought to be servants to the princesses. Many of these women were foreigners—Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women. And it was of the strange women that the king was fondest, and they all brought their own notions of religion. The results, as we shall see, were deplorable.

LXIX. SOLOMON'S BUILDINGS

1 KINGS v.-vii., ix. 15-25; 2 CHRON. ii.-iv., viii. 1-7.

I made me great works; I builded me houses.

The Frontier Fortresses.—Solomon was one of the great builders of history. His first thought would naturally be of defence, and he appears to have been anxious, not so much for retaining the cities and territories that lay on the outskirts of his father's empire, as for maintaining the territory of Israel proper. He guarded this against hostile attacks by strong fortresses. In the north, he fortified HAZOR and MEGIDDO, on the western frontier, the lower BETHHORON, and, according to the chronicler, the upper as well, and GEZER, which had come to him with his Egyptian wife; towards the south, as a protection of the caravan route from Hebron to Elath, TAMAR (*Hazazon Tamar*, old Amorite name for ENGEDI. The A.V. reading *Tadmor*, i.e. Palmyra, is unlikely). The situation of BAALATH, another fortress, is doubtful. Perhaps it was near Gezer.

Extension of Jerusalem.—Nor did this prudent monarch

neglect the defences of his capital. He rebuilt the Millo, David's castle, and the wall of Jerusalem, *repairing*, it is said, *the breaches* (or rather *closing up the breach*) of the city of David his father, an expression which possibly indicates the construction of an embankment from Millo to the Temple hill. This wall probably enclosed about half of the modern Jerusalem, and included on the south some ground now destitute of buildings. The city had originally been confined to the eastern hill on which the Temple was afterwards built, and the slope to the south of it. It had now extended westward, covering a much larger elevation, and filling the Tyropoeon valley that divides the two heights. From the north-west corner the wall went southward, skirting the rising ground to the extremity of the western hill, round which it made a bend, and then made its way towards the last slopes of the city of David, near the tombs of the royal family.¹

Scheme for a new Royal Palace.—But it is on the edifices of his capital that Solomon's renown as a great builder rests. The first undertaken was, apparently, a palace for his Egyptian bride. She had, on her arrival, been lodged in the city of David, but her acquaintance with the magnificence of Egyptian edifices must have made this appear unworthy. Solomon also desired a grander abode for himself. But while he was constructing these he was also busy with a much more important work, the building of the Temple which his father had longed to erect, for which he had made complete preparation, and which he had left as the most important legacy to his successor.

So thus in silent waiting stood,
The piles of stone, the piles of wood.

The Site of the TEMPLE.—The *Haram-esh-Sherif* or Noble Sanctuary, in the north-east angle of Jerusalem, is an extensive irregular quadrangle, some 500 yards long and 350 broad. The surface is irregular, and is studded with cypress and olive trees. At the southern end is the Mosque el-Aksa, a pile of buildings formerly used by the Knights Templar. Nearly in the centre is a raised platform paved with stone, and rising from this is the well-known mosque, Kubbet es-Sakhra, with its beautifully proportioned dome.

The precise spot within this enclosure occupied by Solomon's

¹ Renan, *History of the People of Israel*, bk. iii. ch. xi.

temple has been matter of endless controversy, but we may assume that of the Dome of the Rock as the most likely. Many think the rock beneath the present Dome to be the threshing floor of Araunah, on which David built his altar. The name Moriah, given to the site of the Temple in Chronicles and only occurring else in Gen. xxii. 2, was possibly a sacerdotal term adopted at a later date than the compilation of the Book of Kings, where it does not appear.

Its Design and Material.—The architecture of the Temple, as well as the materials for its decoration and the skill which designed and erected it, came from Phœnicia, which had before adopted Egyptian models. Thus Egypt supplied the general form, Tyre the hewers of stone, the architects, the decorators, and the bronze founders. The slope of the ground towards the west made artificial foundations necessary. The inequalities were filled up by immense substructions of great stones, *costly stones, wrought stone*. "It is of these, if of any part of the Temple, that the remains are still to be seen."

Jerusalem and its neighbourhood furnished the stone, which was shaped in the quarries so that the building might rise noiselessly.

Like some tall palm the noiseless fabric sprung.

But the wood required came chiefly from Lebanon. Solomon paid the wages of the Phœnician workmen, and sent squads of Israelites to help them. The trees were brought down in rafts to Joppa.

Solomon's Porch.—The building faced the east, giving public access only on that side. Its outer barrier was a colonnade or cloister, which, as some think, survived and passed on its name, Solomon's Porch, to the Second Temple (John. v. 23; Acts iii. 11, v. 12).

The Outer Court.—This led into the outer court, the size of which is unknown. From poetical allusions (Ps. lii. 8, xcii. 13) it has sometimes been inferred that it was planted with trees like the present Haram. This was the real place of worship for the *people*, where they presented their sacrifices and celebrated their feasts. The Temple itself was entered by the priests alone.

The Holy of Holies.—The Temple, strictly so called, consisted of two compartments. The most sacred of these was the *Debîr*

(i.e. *hindmost chamber*, not *oracle*, as in Bible), or *Holy of Holies*, at the back or west, perfectly dark, and built in the shape of a cube of 20 cubits. This was to be the throne-room of Jehovah. *Jehovah hath said that He would dwell in the thick darkness.*

The Holy Place.—A screen divided this *adytum* from the Holy Place (*hékál*), an oblong chamber 40 cubits long, 20 broad, and 30 high. It was only lighted by small windows placed high up.

In front of this, opening from it by folding doors, was a porch 20 cubits long and 10 broad, with the two famous pillars, Jachin and Boaz, at its entrance. The names suggest firmness and strength, and may possibly have arisen from a Phœnician inscription left on the pillars by the masons, or formally placed there as a good omen. The pillars were of metal, hollow, with trellised capitals, the designs being lotus and pomegranate.

The Altar.—Doors of cypress, enframed in lintels of wild olive, gave on to an inner court with a platform, on which stood the altar, possibly David's, as there is no record of its erection by Solomon. It was a square chest of wood, plated outside with brass, filled inside with stones and earth, with a brass grating on the top for the fire, the whole placed on a mass of rough stone. There were horns or projections at each corner. "It was much larger than the ancient altar of the Tabernacle, but was itself to be displaced hereafter by a still larger one, as though it grew with the growth of the worship."

The wall of the Temple was not left blank outside. Three storeys of rooms for priests and other officials clung to it, having entrance only from without. There was also, if Josephus may be trusted, a private gallery for the king, reached by a winding staircase from the south.

The Palace.—It was in fact to the south of the Temple platform that Solomon built his palace and that of his Egyptian queen. He probably pulled down his father's palace to make room for it. It was a stupendous work, lasting 13 years.

The House of the Forest of Lebanon.—It embraced three piles of building. The first was the so-called House of the forest of Lebanon, either from being encased in cedar, or from the forest-like appearance presented by its long rows of pillars. The purpose of this stately building may be inferred from its size and shape. It was a hall 100 cubits long and 50 broad, and no doubt served for great gatherings of the nobility

and elders of Israel, while its upper apartments formed an armoury.

The Vestibule.—The second part consisted of two halls lying between the Lebanon Hall and the palace proper. It formed a vestibule leading into a hall of justice. Behind and adjoining the Temple, but somewhat lower, rose the royal palace itself and that of the Egyptian princess. It seems that there was a private royal entrance, perhaps by a gallery, to the Temple, which was in fact the chapel to the palace.

LXX. THE DEDICATION

1 KINGS viii. ; 2 CHRON. v.-vii.

Unseen, secure, in that high shrine
Acknowledged present and divine.

The Temple took about seven years to build. The foundation-stone was laid in the month *Zif* (May) of the fourth year of Solomon's reign. It was completed in the month *Bul* (November) of the eleventh year. And the solemn dedication took place in the month *Ethanim* (October) of the succeeding year, thus falling in with one of the yearly festivals, that of Tabernacles.

The Ark brought to the Temple.—The ark was now brought, after its long wanderings, to its final home. It was an imposing ceremony. *Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel, and all the heads of the tribes, the princes of the fathers' houses of the children of Israel, unto king Solomon in Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the covenant of Jehovah out of the city of David, which is Zion.* The king stood, surrounded by the foreign bodyguard magnificent with the golden targets, while sheep and oxen that could not be numbered for multitude were sacrificed to render the start propitious. A stately procession, partly military and partly sacerdotal, then moved up the hill to the eastern entrance, and on through the courts to the Temple.

It is opened for the Last Time.—But before the *adytum* was reached the sacred chest was opened, and its interior seen for the first time for four hundred years—for the last time,

probably, for ever. *There was nothing in the ark save the two tables of stone, which Moses put there at Horeb, when Jehovah made a covenant with the children of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt.*

And placed in the Holy of Holies. — It was then placed in the Debîr or Holy of Holies, under two large cherubim which had been carved for the purpose, and the long staves which had been used to carry it were half drawn out of their rings and left, apparently with their ends protruding beyond the curtain, as guides, it may be, for the priest when entering the dark chamber.

The King's Address.—Then the king's part in the great ceremony began. A large brazen scaffold had been erected east of the altar, facing the outer court, now thronged with expectant people. The appearance of the priests after depositing the ark was the signal for a great acclaim. The musicians and singers burst forth with the joyful strain which forms the burden of Psalm cxxxvi, the national anthem, as it may be called, of Israel. *For He is good and His mercy endureth for ever*, and when this died away Solomon spoke.

The sun hath Jehovah set in the heavens.

Himself hath said, He will dwell in darkness.

I have built thee a house to dwell in,

A place to dwell in for eternal ages.

Such, gathered partly from the Hebrew, partly from the Greek translation, was the poetical opening of his dedicatory speech. The historian found it possibly in the Book of Jashar, and incorporated it into the long series of addresses, partly prayer, partly benediction, in which no doubt he has presented the substance of what the royal priest uttered on that memorable day.

The Sacrifice.—The consecration was completed by vast and prolonged sacrificial rites. There were consumed twenty-two thousand oxen and one hundred and twenty thousand sheep. Fourteen days the feast lasted, when the king finally dismissed the people, and received their blessing in turn, and *they went away into their tents joyful and glad of heart for all the goodness that Jehovah had showed unto David His servant and to Israel His people.*

Solomon and the Priesthood.—We see from this account what a very subordinate part the priesthood at present played

in the religion of Israel. They are only mentioned as bearing the ark with the Levites. Solomon was priest and king in one. Zadok does not appear in the ceremony. And this was the usual course of things. *Three times a year, we are told, did Solomon offer burnt offerings and peace offerings upon the altar which he built unto the Lord, burning incense therewith upon the altar that was before the Lord.* He was perfectly loyal in his attachment to the national God at this time. Whether he actually contemplated the Temple he had built as the one and only place where Jehovah was henceforth to be worshipped is doubtful. But the idea of centralisation of worship was in the air, as we see by the fears presently to be expressed by Jeroboam, although as yet both king and people may have looked on Mount Zion as only the chief and most sacred of the high places where sacrifice might be offered.

His want of Religious Zeal.—At all events Solomon had now given a strong religious character to his court, and had he not allowed his too tolerant nature to be seduced by his foreign wives, not only to permit them to follow their own cults, but to patronise them himself, and so to appear to posterity as a favourer of *Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and Milcom the abomination of the Amorites, and Chemosh the abomination of Moab*, he might have ranked next his father as an agent in the true development of Israel. But his apostasy, or perhaps we ought to call it latitudinarianism, denied him this right, and he ranks as the maker rather of profane history, while fame and legend dwell only on the splendour of his court and the wisdom in which he excelled.

Shortlived Results of his Reign.¹—It was not Solomon who actually wrote *Vanitas vanitatum*, but these words well sum up his reign. No one ever did more to prove that whatever does not contribute towards the progress of what is good and true is a mere soap-bubble in history. If Israel's destiny had been riches, commerce, science, the profane life in short, Solomon would have been a founder of something durable, for he did confer a brilliant existence, from the material point of view, on a small nation that had scarcely enjoyed one before his time.

But it is always an ungrateful task for a sovereign to work contrary to the current of history, and Solomon's work

¹ Renan, *History of the People of Israel*, bk. iii. ch. xiv.

did not last beyond his own time. Of it all, only the Temple survives him. His empire crumbled to pieces. His palaces were sacked, his treasures carried away. His golden targets must be replaced by shields of brass.

His Wisdom.—Even his wisdom won for him a false fame, and turned to a distorted legend. He became Soleyman the wizard, the magician, the astrologer, the alchemist, the cabalist. His knowledge no doubt embraced all that was to be known in his day. His skill in asking and answering riddles shows him wise in the way most appreciated in the East. The dismay of the Queen of Sheba or *Saba* when she found the wisest of her countrymen outdone is true to Arab character and custom. Probably many contests of wit were held with the wise men of Arabia and Edom, as well as with Hiram, for we are told that Solomon *was wiser than all men ; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol : and his fame was in all the nations round about. And he spake three thousand proverbs : and his songs were a thousand and five.* The part of the Book of Proverbs from x. to xxi. and the first sixteen verses of xxii. may embody many of the wise king's sayings, and the collection was no doubt made under his direction. Of the one thousand and five songs or odes attributed to him we have none. *The Song of Songs which is Solomon's* is about him, but not by him ; and the so-called Psalms of Solomon are of a far later age.

And he spake of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon, even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall : he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes. Some traces of this love for natural history perhaps survive here and there in the proverbs that have come down to us, but the memory of it has taken shape chiefly in the fables so numerous among Arabian tribes of the king's intercourse with birds. The lapwing, it is said, was his special favourite. The cock and the hoopoe were his constant attendants. Clouds of birds formed a canopy for his throne and his litter. The doves were to live in his Temple.

So does time take revenge on those who attain greatness of a kind unsuited to their age, to their nation. What a different fate was Solomon's from his father's ! David, with all his crimes, has become for a world a saint, a type of the Saviour. Solomon, who built the Temple, has become a Sultan of

Arabian Nights, the lord of genii, the great magician. But then he built the Temple.

The Work of David and Solomon.—Both, indeed, laboured to make a capital, and they made a Holy City. Father and son cannot be separated in this work. The completion implies the preparation. These two gave a possession not to Israel but to the world. A rocky hill, without a horizon, without trees, almost without water, will cause hearts to leap for joy thousands of miles away. *Glorious things are spoken of thee, O thou city of God* (Ps. lxxxvii. 3). *I was glad when they said unto me, We will go into the house of the Lord* (Ps. cxxii. 1).¹

LXXI. THE GREAT SCHISM

1 KINGS xi. 26–xii. 17 ; 2 CHRON. x.

Hereditary bondsmen ! know ye not,
Who would be free, themselves must strike the blow.

Amid all the outward splendour of Solomon's reign there were elements of corruption and disintegration at work. Polygamy, polytheism, despotism might be gilded over, but they could not but bring their inevitable consequences. Along with the decline in morals and religion, encouraged in the harem and the court, there followed not unnaturally a decline from the just and wise policy of government which had at first won for Solomon the love and admiration of his subjects. The historian puts the situation in its true light when he says, *Jehovah was angry with Solomon*, and goes on to mention one after the other the adversaries raised up against him. Hadad the Edomite, Rezon ben Eliada, and a third, whose history we are approaching, more formidable still.

Burdensome Exactions of Solomon.—Little is said, but much is implied, of the burdens of forced labour and taxation, which grew with the increasing need for money for the royal establishment and the vast building operations. The people of Jerusalem may have been fairly contented, for they enjoyed the magnificent result of the exactions. But it must have been different with the thousands who were groaning in the quarries

¹ Renan, *History of the People of Israel*, bk. ii. ch. xviii.

of Judah, in the forests of Lebanon, and in the galleys on the Red Sea.

Religious Indignation.—Still Solomon might have gone to his grave without open signs of discontent, had he not aroused the indignation of the pious worshippers of the national God. The prophets were not extinct, and though, as yet, none raised his voice in the capital, the discontent with existing things found expression in the mouth of a seer belonging to the Josephite tribes.

Early Tendency to Separation.—From the very first entrance into Canaan there had been a tendency to separation between the northern and southern peoples. They had effected the conquest of their respective territories independently, and for a while a long strip of unconquered Canaanitish territory, lying between the house of Joseph and the house of Judah, kept them geographically distinct. The pride and jealousy of the tribe of Ephraim were as conspicuous as its power. Even in Joshua's day it joined with its brother tribes in a complaint of the insufficiency of its portion for such a *great people*, and was always ready to resent the initiative which from selfishness it had failed itself to take. To Gideon, to Jephthah, as to David himself, its cry was the same: *Why hast thou served us thus?* (Josh. xvii. 14; Judg. viii. 1, xii. 1; 2 Sam. xix. 41). It had wanted a David to give even a superficial union. The time was close at hand when the jealousy and dislike would break out into open rupture. It began, indeed, while Solomon was alive.

Rise of Jeroboam.—Towards the end of his reign, while completing the defences of the Millo, he noticed with approval the industry of a young man named Jeroboam ben Nebat, an Ephraimite of Zereda, a person apparently of low station, the son of a poor widow, but eminently capable. The king assigned him the oversight of the forced labour of the Josephite tribes, the best opportunity for becoming acquainted with the complaints of the people, and turning them to advantage.

His Meeting with the Prophet.—He went to them too, prepared by a prophetic call. *For it came to pass at that time when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, that the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite found him in the way: Now Ahijah had clad himself with a new garment; and they two were alone in the field. And Ahijah laid hold of the new garment that was on*

him, and rent it in twelve pieces. And he said to Jeroboam, Take thee ten pieces ; for thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee.

The announcement went on to reserve one tribe to Solomon's son, and to confirm the dynasty of Jeroboam in the north, if he would walk in the ways which Solomon had so sadly deserted, and keep Jehovah's statutes and commandments as David had done.

His Revolt and Flight.—After a longer or shorter time, Jeroboam resolved to raise the standard of revolt. He achieved nothing, however. Either the conspiracy was prematurely discovered, or the rising was suppressed. He himself escaped to Egypt, where he met with a good reception from the reigning Pharaoh, Shishak, or Sheshonk as he is named in Egyptian annals, who had founded a new dynasty, the Bubastite or XXIIInd. This monarch was, of course, glad of an opportunity of doing mischief to the son-in-law of the rival whom he had dethroned. Egyptologists put Shishak somewhere between 990 and 960 B.C.

Death of Solomon, about 960 B.C.—Chronological Difficulties.—Solomon died after a reign of forty years, about 960 B.C. But *forty* is constantly used in the Bible as a round number. And it is still necessary to use this word *about* in giving dates. At first sight, since the Book of Kings assigns to the reigns in Judah and Israel their duration in years, and we have from other sources, chiefly Assyrian, some fixed points, it looks as if a certain date for Solomon might be easily obtained. But the Judahite list, reckoning down to Hezekiah, gives twenty-one years more than the corresponding list of Israel. Many systems of chronology have been arranged to bring them into agreement. But since these differ widely from one another it is best to rest satisfied with an approximate date, except where the Assyrian monuments have introduced certainty.

Peaceable Accession of Rehoboam at Jerusalem.—No attempt was made in Jerusalem to oppose the principle of hereditary succession in the person of the eldest son. It was destined to be maintained in Judah for four centuries, by a special promise of Jehovah to the dynasty of the builder of the Temple. It was part of the message of the prophet Ahijah to

Jeroboam. *Howbeit I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand. . . . And unto his son will I give one tribe, that David My servant may have a lamp alway before Me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen Me to put My name there.*

But equally sure was the Divine sentence for the dismemberment of the Solomonic kingdom. For *Jehovah was angry with Solomon because his heart was turned away from Jehovah, the God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice, and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he kept not that which Jehovah commanded.*

Character and Position of Rehoboam.—Rehoboam, the son of Solomon by Naamah, daughter of Hanun, king of the Ammonites, appears to have been a man of limited intelligence and of obstinate disposition. He must have known of the discontent that was fermenting in the northern part of the kingdom, and had he, on his quiet accession, made overtures of conciliation by promising to relax some of the burdens weighing on the people, he might have reigned over the whole country in peace. For the northern tribes had apparently resolved to confirm his accession, only stipulating that the ceremony should take place at Shechem. At all events, we find him going there to be made king.

Return of Jeroboam—Demands of the Northern Tribes.—But Jeroboam had hurried back from Egypt on the news of Solomon's death, and had at once put himself at the head of a party determined on reform. The demands they made were very moderate. *Thy father made our yoke grievous: now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father and his heavy yoke which he put upon us lighter, and we will serve thee.* The king asked for three days' consideration.

Rehoboam's Reply.—Rehoboam was one-and-forty, and he had by his side a number of older counsellors, who had probably known the times of David and the better traditions of the earlier times of Solomon. They advised him to yield to the wish of the tribes, and, at the same time, obey the voice of reason. *If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve them, and answer them, and speak good words unto them, then they will be thy servants for ever.*

But when he turned to the younger generation of courtiers, they advised the sternest measures of repression. And when the three days expired *the king answered the people roughly, and*

forsook the counsel of the old men which they had given him ; and spake to them after the counsel of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke : my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions ; with whips, that is, tipped with metal points.

Rebellion of the Northern Tribes.—The die was cast. The discontent broke out with open mutiny, and the old gathering cry of the northern tribes rang through the assembly.

What portion have we in David ?

Neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse.

To your tents, O Israel !

Now see to thine own house, David.

Henceforth we have to follow the fortunes of two kingdoms, generally at war with each other, always rivals, yet each in its own way carrying on the vocation of this people, and preparing the world for the advent of the Messiah and Christianity.

LXXII. THE DIVIDED REALM

1 KINGS xii. 17–xv. 8 ; 2 CHRON. x. 17–xiii.

Which is the side that I must go withal ?
I am with both ; each army hath a hand.

Adoram slain—Jeroboam crowned.—*So Israel departed unto their tents.* The Judahites who had gone with Rehoboam to Shechem remained faithful to him, and he made one effort even now to win back the malcontents. But it was a fatuous proceeding. He chose as his emissary Adoram, or Adoniram, *who was over the tribute*, and therefore was the very embodiment of the grievances under which the people were smarting. The poor man fell a victim to the unpopularity of his position. *And all Israel stoned him with stones, that he died.* Rehoboam feared for his own life, and *made speed to get him up to his chariot to flee to Jerusalem.* A congregation of the northern tribes was then convoked, and Jeroboam was formally made king, *and there was none that followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only.* To this we must add Benjamin, which was merged in Judah. Had Jeroboam been of the house of Saul it might have been different, but Jerusalem itself was

partly, if not wholly, in Benjamin. A line drawn from east to west through Bethel would serve as a rude boundary line between the two kingdoms.

JUDAH—REHOBAM.

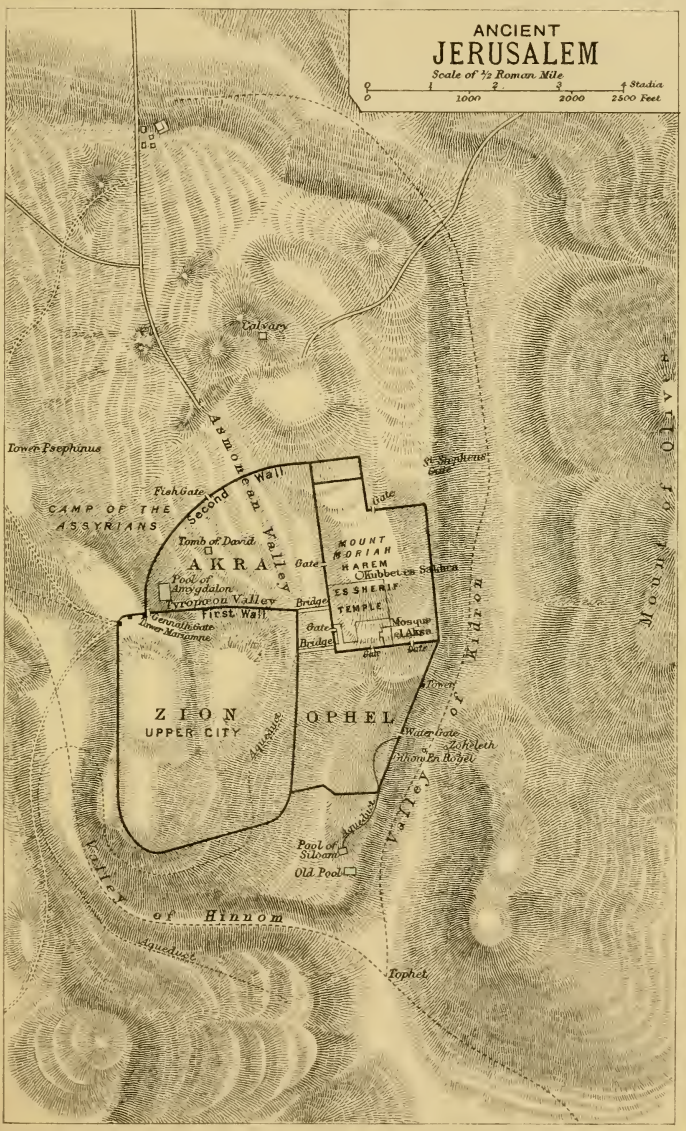
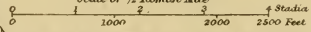
About 960 B.C. Reigned seventeen years.

Attempts at Reconquest—Prophetic Opposition.—On returning to his capital, Rehoboam's first thought was to levy his forces, and wrest back his lost dominion; but he found himself opposed from an unexpected quarter. The prophets, reduced to silence during the whole of Solomon's reign, began to speak again, even in the vicinity of Jerusalem. *The word of God came unto Shemaiah the man of God. Thus saith Jehovah saying, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren the children of Israel.* What the king thought of this we may gather from the fact that he made no attempts at peace. Hostilities were resumed, it may be in a desultory way, *for there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all the days of his life.* But the prophetic message had been delivered in public, not privately, to the king, but openly *unto all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and the rest of the people,* and Rehoboam's hastily levied army dispersed before a higher order than his, *Return every man to his house; for this thing is from Me. So they hearkened to the word of the LORD, and returned and went their way according to the word of the LORD.* We are not told when Rehoboam revived his attempt to coerce Israel, nor the details of the quarrel, which lasted throughout his reign of seventeen years. We only know its consequences.

Shishak's Invasion—Jerusalem plundered.—In the fifth year of the reign, Shishak, who was then Pharaoh, thought to rival the exploits of Thothmes and Rameses in Syria. Rehoboam had perhaps from the first been suspicious of this dangerous neighbour on the south, and had fortified many places on the route an Egyptian army would be likely to take. Fifteen fortified cities thus put in a state of defence are mentioned, including Hebron, Lachish, Gath, and Bethlehem. But these precautions proved useless. In the list of places claimed as taken by Shishak, carved on the south wall of the Hall of Columns at Karnak, we find three of the very cities fortified by

ANCIENT JERUSALEM

Scale of 1/2 Roman Mile



Rehoboam—Adoraim, Aijalon, and Socoh. The inscription does not however mention Jerusalem, although the king of Egypt entered that city as a conqueror, and carried off the treasures of the Temple and Royal Palace, including the golden shields preserved as trophies of David's victory over Hadadezer.

Limits of Rehoboam's Dominions.—The recollection of this catastrophe was long preserved in the brazen substitutes with which Rehoboam poorly tried to represent the former grandeur. The bitter irony with which the sacred historian records the parade of these counterfeits may be considered as the keynote to this whole period.¹ *And it was so, that as oft as the king entered into the house of the LORD, the guard bare them, and brought them back into the guard-chamber.* The power of Solomon's son was thus limited on every side. A district of fifteen or twenty miles round Jerusalem comprised his kingdom. But then he had the capital, and there is great significance in the Chronicler's remark, even in this decline of his power, *So king Rehoboam strengthened himself in Jerusalem.* This represented the idea, if not the fact, of the unity of the whole of the Hebrew race. And the Temple was there, which, as Solomon had foreseen, was coming to be regarded not only as the most sacred of the places where Jehovah might be worshipped, but as the only building worthy of the national faith.

Death of Rehoboam.—Rehoboam had some religion. He *humbled himself*, as the Chronicler himself admits, when a prophet's voice bade him see in the success of Egypt a judgment from heaven. But the verdict passed upon him by the same writer is that *he did that which was evil, because he set not his heart to seek the LORD*; and this is confirmed by what the Book of Kings says of Judah in his day. Shemaiah the prophet and Iddo the seer wrote annals of his reign, much of which may be incorporated in the later books which we possess. *When he slept with his fathers he was buried in the city of David.*

ISRAEL—JEROBOAM.

About 960 B.C. Reigned twenty-two years.

The Kingdom of Israel.—Meantime Jeroboam was taking measures to consolidate his power and seat himself securely on

¹ Stanley, *Jewish Church*, Lect. xxxv. vol. ii. 385.

the throne of the newly-formed northern kingdom. There was much in his favour. He had by far the larger and richer of the two parts of Israel. And he had the prestige of the name Israel. His was the *national* kingdom. At a later period it was generally known as Ephraim or Samaria, but in the historical books it is always Israel; in the earlier prophetic books it is Israel (or children of Israel), unless the names Jacob and Joseph are employed.

Attitude of the Prophets.—He had also all the weight of prophetic influence on his side. His nomination by the northern tribes had not been an act of usurpation in their eyes, but was part of the Divine purpose. *Thus saith Jehovah, This thing is of Me.* The schools of the prophets were all in his territory. For two out of the three centuries during which the northern kingdom lasted, it, and not Judah, was the field of prophetic activity.

One reason of this we see in the fact that the prophet is always on the side of freedom, and the cause which had led to the disruption had been the overmastering fondness for the ancient life of freedom. The tribal spirit, the habits of the nomad and patriarchal life, were still very keen among the Josephites. We shall see, not once, but many times, maintained by patriarchal men under the kings of Tirzah or Samaria, a stately independence that we do not meet with in the southern kingdom.¹

Inroads of Shishak—Extent of Jeroboam's Dominions.—Nor was there in the external relations of the kingdom of Israel anything to contradict this assumption of superiority over its rival. Shishak, indeed, if his list of conquered towns may be trusted, did not spare the territory of Jeroboam, who, according to a tradition preserved in the LXX., was his brother-in-law. It may have been in consequence of this inroad that he retired to Penuel across the Jordan. But practically the whole extent of country which had remained to Solomon was embraced in his kingdom. To the confines of Damascus, into Naphtali beyond the sources of the Jordan, to the tribes beyond the Jordan, through the whole valley of the Jordan down to the Dead Sea, his power extended.

But in comparison with his southern neighbour he had two sources of weakness.

¹ Renan, *History of the People of Israel*, bk. iv. ch. i.

Want of a Capital.—He possessed no city that could compete with Jerusalem as a capital. Shechem, where he built a castle, had never been favourable to dynastic pretensions. Penuel was little more than an outpost.

Want of a Religious Centre.—And he had no one central rallying-place for the religious sentiment of his kingdom. Israel possessed many sanctuaries, Bethel, Dan, Shiloh, Gilgal, Tabor, Nebo, all of them older than Jerusalem, but none appealing with irresistible force to the whole country. And Jeroboam saw growing a craving for something like unity in worship. He was therefore afraid that his subjects would venture to attend the feasts at Zion, and might falter in their allegiance to him.

And Jeroboam said in his heart, if this people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of Jehovah at Jerusalem, there shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam, king of Judah, and they shall kill me and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah. If the centre of gravity of the religious life returned to Jerusalem, that of the political life would follow, and already the Temple was attracting the Levites from their northern homes.

Sanctuaries at Dan and Bethel.—To defeat this danger, Jeroboam acted as Abdurrahman, Caliph of Spain, acted when he built Cordova to counteract the attraction of Mecca. He selected two well-known sanctuaries—Dan, in the extreme north, which had long possessed an ephod and a sacerdotal order; and Bethel, on his southern frontier, with all its ancient patriarchal associations—and made them centres of worship.

The Golden Calf.—There was nothing in this to shock the conscience of the age, for the idea of a single legitimate national centre of worship had as yet gained no hold on the Hebrew mind, if indeed it had ever been enunciated as an exclusive dogma. Even the images called ephods might also still have been tolerated. But when the figure of a calf or bull was again, as by Aaron, placed in a shrine to represent the Deity, Jeroboam was guilty of a crime, the horror of which clung to his name for ever. For all later history he was *Jeroboam ben Nebat, who made Israel to sin*.

Prophetic Denunciations.—Prophetic indignation was aroused, especially in Judah. At the solemn inauguration of the altar at Bethel by the king and the priests whom, regardless of caste,

he had appointed to serve at his altars, a man of God from that country suddenly appeared to denounce the abominable idolatry. The rent in the altar, the withering of the king's hand, the curious behaviour of the elder prophet who induced the younger to break his vow—these, which are told in the fascinating but puzzling 13th chapter of 1 Kings, are introduced into the history as if to emphasise the precise moment at which the prophetic order recovered its equilibrium, and yet indicate that the jealousy between the kingdoms was shared by prophets.¹

The Prophecy of Ahijah.—Another incident, which gives a touching glimpse into the royal home, now established at Tirzah, where Jeroboam had apparently built himself a palace, marks the growing opposition of the prophetic body. Abijah, the heir to the kingdom, had fallen sick amid the vines and olive gardens and umbrageous parks of the new royal abode. The Egyptian princess, his mother, went disguised as a poor woman to consult Ahijah the Shilonite, who, as Jeroboam recalls to her, *told me that I should be king over this people.*

But the prophet, now old and blind, greeted her at once as the queen of Jeroboam, and despite the mother's tears, pronounced the death of the heir and the doom of the house of Jeroboam, nay, the ultimate ruin of the kingdom, all the fatal consequences of the sin of one who would have founded a dynasty in defiance—so, at least, the more pious thought—of Jehovah.

JUDAH—ABIJAH.

Reigned three years.

War with Jeroboam.—The favourite wife in the harem of Rehoboam had been Maacah, the daughter of Absalom, and her son Abijah (the form *Abijam* of the Book of Kings appears to be later than the date of the Greek translation), who had been treated as heir to the throne, succeeded without opposition from the other sons. These had their own princely establishments in the various towns of Judah. The reign was only three years, and the Book of Kings tells us nothing about it, except that it was occupied by war with Jeroboam. Of the king himself it gives a melancholy account. *He walked in all the sins of his father, which he had done before him; and his*

¹ Stanley, *Jewish Church*, Lect. XXIX. vol. ii. 279.

heart was not perfect with Jehovah his God, as the heart of David his father.

Victory of Judah.—But in the Book of Chronicles, Abijah presents a far more favourable appearance. He appears as the champion of the true national God, who, on his cry for help and the blast of the priestly trumpets, intervenes at a critical moment, so that *God smote Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah. And the children of Israel fled before Judah: and God delivered them into their hand.*

Abijah and Jeroboam died within two years of one another, about 940 B.C. Each was succeeded by a son; but Nadab in the north mounted a throne on which, to his contemporaries, the curse of God seemed to rest, where conspiracy and usurpation were scarcely ever to cease. Whereas, of Abijah, the historian, after lamenting that his heart was not perfect with Jehovah his God, can add, *Nevertheless, for David's sake, did Jehovah his God give him a lamp in Jerusalem, to set up his son after him, and to establish Jerusalem.*

LXXIII. ATTEMPTS AT REFORM

1 KINGS xv. 9–xvi. 29; 2 CHRON. xiv.–xvi.

Heaven hath a hand in these events.

JUDAH—ASA.

About 940 B.C. Reigned forty-one years.

Asa's Religious Zeal.—This son was Asa. He was a sincere worshipper of Jehovah, and set about a religious reform. He destroyed the idols and images of Baal-Harmon, erected by his father, and even degraded the queen mother, Maacah, *because she had made an abominable image for an Asherah: and Asa cut down her image, and burned it at the brook Kidron.* This was probably a wooden image of the goddess Astarte. But sacrifices on the Bamoth, or high places, were still permitted. The centralisation of all worship at Jerusalem was still

for the future, but the growing importance of the Temple is marked by the attention which Asa gave to it. *He brought into the house of Jehovah the things which his father had dedicated, and the things that himself had dedicated, silver, and gold, and vessels.*

War with Egypt.—On a monument disinterred at Bubastis in Egypt, it is recorded that Osorkon II., great-grandson of Shishak, threw under his feet the upper and lower Retennu.

It was a false boast, if the account in 2 Chron. xiv. of Asa's victory over Zerah the Ethiopian refers to the same campaign, for by the Upper Retennu the Egyptians meant Palestine, and at Mareshah (Merash), in the valley of Zephathah, west of Hebron, in answer to Asa's cry for help, Jehovah *smote the Ethiopians*, and they fled. The confusion between Ethiopian and Egyptian, and the exaggeration of the numbers on both sides, show that the Chronicler was not accurately informed.

ISRAEL.

NADAB. *Reigned two years.*

BAASHA. *Reigned twenty-four years.*

In the meantime the seed of rebellion sown by Jeroboam had begun to bear its evil fruits in his own house. Nadab, his son, reigned only two years. He fell a victim to a military revolution.

War with the Philistines—Extermination of the Family of Jeroboam.—War had recommenced with the Philistines, who had been quiet since David's time. They had possession of Gibbethon (perhaps Kibbiah, in the hills north-east of Lydda), and *Nadab and all Israel laid siege to it.* But during the siege his general, Baasha ben Ahijah, of the tribe of Issachar, conspired against him and seized him, and then, to secure himself, extirpated the whole race of Jeroboam. But in religious matters he followed the leading of that king. Tirzah was his royal residence.

JUDAH AND ISRAEL.

Baasha fortifies Ramah.—*And there was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all their days.* It was a war very much resembling those between the rival states of Greece.

It raged chiefly round the frontier towns. Baasha began fortifying Ramah, a place hardly ten miles north of Jerusalem, and commanding all the roads to it, apparently with the purpose of making it his capital instead of Tirzah. This drove Asa to a policy of despair, frequently imitated afterwards with fatal consequences.

Asa seeks Aid from Syria.—He applied for help to Damascus, and induced Benhadad its king to break with Baasha, and call off his attention by an inroad into his territory. He obtained the money necessary to buy this alliance by ransacking the Temple and his own palace for their treasures.

He is denounced by Hanani.—It is not to be wondered at that a prophet should have sharply censured this action. It was the first, but not the only time, that Judah called in the aid of foreign help against its northern foe, allied to it by ties of race, instead of seeking to compose the fratricidal strife. Asa had been forgetful, too, of the victory granted by Jehovah over Zerah, and instead of trusting in his God had relied on human aid. It was one Hanani the seer who thus rebuked the king and fell a victim to his zeal, for Asa imprisoned him. We know nothing else of him, unless he was the father of Jehu, a prophet who presently pronounced Baasha's doom. That with which later on Isaiah threatened king Ahaz, was now predicted of Asa. In that case it was Assyria which rendered a service to Judah only to end by attacking her. For the present it is the Syrian interference in the affairs of Canaan which has been evoked by Asa's short-sighted policy.

Baasha abandons Ramah.—The policy was for the moment no doubt eminently successful. Baasha was compelled to abandon his works at Ramah in haste that he might meet Benhadad's captains, who had already overrun the whole of his country north of the Sea of Galilee, taking Ijon, Dan, and Abel-beth-maachah, leaving all his building materials in Asa's hands, who used them to fortify Geba of Benjamin and Mizpah. Bossuet has turned this military incident to a fine use as illustrating the duty, not of rejecting the materials or the arguments collected by unbelievers or by heretics, but of employing them to build up the truth. *Batissons les forteresses de Juda des debris et des ruines de celles de Samarie.*

Death of Asa.—Asa died of gout after a long reign of forty-one years, and was buried in the city of David. The Chronicler

finds fault with him for trusting more to physicians than to Jehovah in his sickness. His son Jehoshaphat succeeded him.

Denunciation and Death of Baasha.—Baasha is one of the few kings of Israel who died a natural death, and whose remains were laid to rest in a royal tomb. He was buried at Tirzah after a reign of twenty-four years. He appears to have been a good soldier, but as a king he drew down on himself the indignation of the prophet Jehu ben Hanani, not only because he continued the sin of Jeroboam, but also because he had killed him. But the retribution was to fall on his house, not on himself. *Him that dieth of Baasha in the city shall the dogs eat, and him that dieth of his in the fields shall the fowls of the air eat.*

ISRAEL.

ELAH. *Reigned two years.*

In two years the predicted strokes of fate began to fall. Elah, who had succeeded his father, was carrying on the siege of Gibbethon begun by Nadab, but not in person. He was enjoying himself at Tirzah, when one of his cavalry officers, Zimri, possibly a descendant of the house of Saul, attacked him in a drunken revel, and murdered him and the whole royal family. This was about 910 B.C.

ZIMRI. *Reigned seven days.*

The conspirator only enjoyed his success seven days. The moment the news reached the camp at Gibbethon, the *sarsaba* Omri was by acclamation named king, and marched immediately against his rival, who in despair shut himself up in the palace, set fire to it, and perished, Sardanapalus-like, in the flames.

OMRI. *Reigned twelve years.*

But Omri had still to fight for his throne. A certain Tibni ben Ginath set up as a pretender, and apparently had a large following, so that it took a long and hard struggle to defeat him.

Choice of a New Capital—The Palace of Tirzah.—It is unfortunate that the Bible only preserves a scrap of the history of Omri's reign, five verses in all, for he must have been a

remarkable man. We might gather this indeed even from the brief notice of him in the sacred narrative, for he showed the sagacity of a Constantine in the choice of the new capital which he gave to his kingdom. The hamlet of Tirzah could hardly be called by this name, though it possessed a royal palace, which, in the popular songs, was compared to that of Jerusalem, and employed as a type of beauty joined to strength.

Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah,

Comely as Jerusalem;

Terrible as an army with banners (Cant. vi. 4).

The Fortification of Samaria.—Jezreel (now Zerin) in its rich plain seemed in many respects destined to fill the vacant position, and in fact the house of Omri never quite abandoned it as a residence, but possibly it at that time had no acropolis which could be fortified. Omri chose a site in every way appropriate.¹ It was a round isolated hill, over 300 feet high, rising out of a wide basin, about six miles north-west of Shechem (Nablus), and, although itself overlooked on three sides by higher eminences, commanding to the west a view as far as the Mediterranean. The coast, in fact, is but twenty-three miles away, an important advantage to a dynasty whose strength lay in alliance with Phœnicia. This hill Omri fortified, calling it Shomeron ("Guard"), thus preserving at once the name of Shemer, from whom he bought it for two talents of silver (about £700), and denoting the military advantages of its situation. The name changed through Greek influence to Samaria. All traces of Omri's buildings have long ago disappeared beneath the Roman ruins of the modern Sebastiyeh. We are told by one traveller that the place combined three features nowhere else found together in Palestine—strength, beauty, fertility. Isaiah calls it *a crown of pride, a flower of glorious beauty, which is on the head of the fat valley* (Isa. xxviii. 1).

Omri also was the founder of a dynasty which actually lasted nearly fifty years, and which had an importance far beyond this duration. For it gave its name, in the records of other countries, to all the subsequent royal houses of Israel and to the country itself. In the Assyrian monuments the kingdom of Israel is always called "the land of Omri," and its reigning family "the house of Omri."

¹ G. A. Smith, *Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, p. 346.

His relations with Assyria.—Omri is indeed the first king of Israel who is mentioned in the Assyrian inscriptions. This points to a new period. Assyria now comes within the horizon of Israel. It becomes more and more a factor which has to be reckoned with. Soon enough it will become the factor which decisively determines the history of Israel.

¹ “Two hundred years before this period, about the turning point of the twelfth century, the powerful Tiglath-Pileser I. had carried his ensigns beyond the Euphrates.” But a period of weakness and incapacity ensued, lasting all the middle of the tenth century.

His Conquest of Moab.—Whether, when Assyrian power began to revive, Omri himself ever came into actual contact with it, is matter of conjecture, but his relations with another foreign power are matters of history, and show him as a brave and frequently victorious soldier. The pillar of Mesha, or, as it is called in this country, “the Moabite stone,” mentions his name twice. Mesha, son of Chemosh-melech, was a contemporary of Omri’s son Ahab, if not of Omri himself. He erected the famous pillar at Dibon, his capital, to commemorate his victories, which he attributes to his God Chemosh, just as the Hebrews attributed their successes to Jehovah. In the inscription we read—

Omri, king of Israel, who oppressed Moab a long time, for Chemosh was angry with his land. . . . And Omri took the whole land of Medeba, and occupied it all his days, and half of his son’s days, forty years.

His Death and Burial.—The Bible only allows twelve years’ reign to Omri, but the chronology is so inaccurate that some critics correct this statement, from Mesha’s account, so far as to give him a reign considerably longer. He was buried in the sepulchral caves which he had commanded to be hewn in the rocks near Samaria. *And Ahab his son reigned in his stead.*

¹ Kittel, *History of the Hebrews*, bk. iii, ch. i.

LXXIV. PROPHETS AND KINGS

1 KINGS xvi. 29, xvii.

Prophet of God, arise and take
With Thee the words of wrath divine.

JUDAH AND ISRAEL.

JEHOSHAPHAT AND AHAB.

Tendency to Peace—Policy of Jehoshaphat.—The beginning of the ninth century B.C. found on the thrones of Judah and Israel monarchs disposed to put an end to the strife which had continued uninterruptedly between the two kingdoms since the usurpation of Jeroboam. Jehoshaphat in the southern kingdom, Ahab in the northern, saw the advantage to be gained by both in a peaceful settlement. The former was intent on internal reforms, social and religious. He also had the insight to see, in his father's policy, how dangerous it was to let the Aramæans of Damascus discover that Israelites might be beaten. We shall find him presently joining Ahab in a campaign against Benhadad of Syria, and cementing the alliance by a matrimonial connection.

ISRAEL—AHAB.

About 900 B.C. Reigned twenty-two years.

Policy of Ahab.—To Ahab it was all important to get a reversal of Asa's policy. It was his only chance against Damascus. And it is possible that he foresaw a new danger, the growing ambition of Assyria. The renewed passion for conquest had returned to this empire with the return of strength, under Assurnatsirpal, father of Shalmaneser II. This prince calls himself conqueror of the region beyond the Tigris, as far as Lebanon and the Great Sea. He began to reign B.C. 885.

The Prophets of Israel and the New Policy.—But a settlement which on moral grounds looks to us as meritorious, as on political grounds it was advantageous, wore a very different look to the prophets, in whom was embodied the conscience of Israel.

Influx of Phœnician Luxury.—Two reasons are apparent for this. Once more, as under Solomon, forgetful of her vocation, which was to carry in herself the religious future of the world, Israel was striving after a development of the profane or secular life. A tendency towards luxury and refinement was again taking the place of the old patriarchal simplicity. And, as before, it was chiefly from Tyre that this invasion of luxury and art was coming on Israel. Jezebel, Ahab's queen, brought with her to Samaria head-dresses and jewels which dazzled the eyes of a rough and homely nation. In the eyes of the prophets she was the embodiment of all these new and dangerous ideas.

Phœnician Deities introduced.—But she brought worse than ornaments. Again, as under Solomon, the religious feelings of the true worshippers of Jehovah were outraged by the patronage given by an Israelite monarch to the worship of Baal. A temple was built in the northern capital to the chief Phœnician deity. A splendid priesthood attended it. The strange god had prophets as numerous, or more numerous than those of Jehovah. All those loyal to the old faith saw the growing danger. The time for a great decision was evidently at hand.

Accession and Character of Ahab.—Ahab succeeded his father Omri, about 900 B.C., when quite a young man. For he was to reign twenty-two years, and, according to the Moabite stone, he lived forty years. This is probably only an approximate round number, of which the Semitic tribes were so fond, else we might say that he ascended the throne at eighteen. He ranks as the most infamous of all the kings either of Israel or Judah. We can hardly wonder that in estimating his character the sacred writer should have looked only to the bad that was in him, and at the evil he did. But he must have had many qualities that go to make a successful prince. He tried, at least, to advance the material prosperity of his country.

His Religious Attitude.—The prophetic sentence goes out against him at once. *And Ahab, the son of Omri, did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah above all that were before him. And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Zidonians (that is of Tyre and Sidon united), and went and served Baal, and worshipped him. And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. And Ahab made*

the Asherah ; and Ahab did yet more to provoke Jehovah the God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him.

This must not be interpreted as entire apostasy from Jehovah, for we shall find him presently consulting Jehovah's prophets. He gave his children names implying the worship of the national god—Jehoram, Ahaziah, Athaliah. And a most undeniable authority, the stone of Mesha, Ahab's contemporary, represents Jehovah as Ahab's God, just as Chemosh is Mesha's own God.

The fact is, that like Gideon and Saul and others before him, and like, perhaps, the mass of the people of his own day, he honoured the two deities simultaneously. The name Baal had not yet become derogatory of true divinity, for it simply means "Lord," and was often employed of Jehovah himself. To us the spectacle of a nation *halting* between two opinions as to the superiority of the Hebrew or the Tyrian deity, is almost incomprehensible, because we connect with Israel's God all those moral characteristics which the great prophets, and later, Christianity, made inseparable from the conception of the Divine. But the perception of these was only dawning at the period with which we are engaged. In Samaria, in Ahab's time, there were to be found side by side adherents of both creeds. These might say to each other, "I have my God, I serve him, you can serve your own ; they are both powerful."

Appearance of Elijah.—But one was soon to appear who would make the distinction clear. The great Elijah comes suddenly upon the scene. From Tishbeh in Gilead he breaks across the Jordan with the same suddenness with which he afterwards disappears across the same river. Of his past we know nothing. His name Elijah, *Yah is my God*, sums it up. His birth-place, unless El-Istib, some twenty miles south of Genesareth, and ten miles east of the Jordan, proves to be Tishbeh, is unknown. In the narrative he has no settled home, no city to dwell in. He is of no place. He stands before Jehovah. *As Jehovah liveth, before whom I stand*, is his form of solemn asseveration. It is also the epitome of his history.

His Prophecy of Drought.—One day Elijah appears before Ahab with the announcement that for three years *there shall not be dew nor rain*. We can picture the figure of the sudden apparition. It was that of the Bedawin of to-day, "whose strange form is seen for a moment behind rock or tree, in city or field,

and then vanishes again into its native wilderness. Long shaggy hair flowed over his back. A large rough mantle of sheepskin, fastened round his loins by a girdle of hide, was his only covering.”¹ He delivered his awful message and then vanished as he had come.

In Eastern lands, where life and water go always together, drought means famine. “The springs are dried up, the brooks and rivers become beds of stone, the trees wither, the grass vanishes, the heaven becomes brass and the earth iron.” God’s ministers must suffer with the rest, and Elijah must hide from Ahab.

He is fed by Ravens.¹—The Divine direction sent him first to the bed of one of those torrents that pour into the Jordan, whose waters were as yet unexhausted. Whether Cherith is in Eastern or Western Palestine we do not know. All we are told is that thither, night and morning, came ravens, the *young ravens that cry to God*, the ravens whom God feeds, though *they neither sow nor reap*, and laid their portion of bread and flesh at break of day and at fall of evening by the side of the still gushing stream, of which the prophet drank and was preserved.

“But the drought advanced, and the pools in the watercourse were dried up, and the trees withered on its banks, and the fowls of the air ceased to flock to their branches,” and *the word of the Lord came unto him saying, Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there; behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee.*

But even there, though the streams of Lebanon would retain their life-giving power after the scantier springs of Palestine had been dried up, the famine had spread. “We learn from heathen records that it was long remembered in Phœnicia, and that solemn prayers for rain were offered up in the temples of Astarte by Ethbaal, king of Tyre.”

The Widow of Zarephath.—And so the widow of Zarephath had come out to the gate of the town to gather sticks, as she thought, for her last meal; and as she gathered them she heard the voice of one faint and weary saying: *Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.* She saw and turned, and once again he begged, *Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thy hand.* She told her own destitution. *A handful of meal in the barrel, a little oil in the cruse, this*

¹ Stanley, *Jewish Church*, Lect. xxx. vol. ii. 294, 297, 298.

was all that was left for herself and her son. Elijah bade her *fear not, for thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that Jehovah sendeth rain upon the earth.* And she obeyed the instinct of humanity, and gave of her last little to this gaunt and famished stranger, whom at most she could know only as a prophet of an alien God and an alien race. But she saved in him the deliverer of herself and her son. She gave the cup of cold water. She received a prophet in the name of a prophet, and received a prophet's reward. *And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail.*

Elijah restores her Son to Life.—But more than this, the woman's son fell sick, *and his sickness was so sore that there was no breath left in him.* She connected the sad event with Elijah's presence. It was a judgment for some unrepented sin. *What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? Thou art come unto me to bring my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son.* Elijah shared her feeling. *O Jehovah, my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son?* He stretched himself upon the child three times and prayed, and the child revived and was restored to his mother. *And the woman said to Elijah, Now I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of Jehovah in thy mouth is truth.*

"It was a prelude to the scene which many generations later was witnessed near that very spot where a greater than Elijah met the Syro-Phœnician woman, and blessed her faith, and told her that it should be even as she would."

LXXV. THE GREAT DECISION AT CARMEL

1 KINGS xviii.

The whole, or chief
Of difficulties, is belief.

AHAB'S REIGN—*continued.*

Meeting of Elijah and Ahab.—The drought still continued, and the king himself set out with his chief minister to seek for such patches of vegetation as might still be found for the

sustenance of the royal stables. Obadiah was what his name, "servant of Jehovah," indicates, a devout adherent to the national faith. It was he who, in the persecution of the true prophets by Jezebel, had hidden and fed *a hundred of them by fifty in a cave*. Yet when met by Elijah and bidden announce him to Ahab he shrank from such a dangerous task. He feared that, according to his wont, the prophet would suddenly vanish, and still elude the search made for him by the king. But at last he was persuaded, and prophet and king met face to face. *Is it thou, thou troubler of Israel?* "It was then, doubtless, as it still is, the belief of Eastern countries that seers and saints have the power of withholding or giving rain. In the convent of Mount Sinai the Arabs believe there is a book, by opening or shutting which, the monks can disperse or retain the rain of the peninsula." So Ahab accused Elijah of the drought. And he answered, *I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of Jehovah, and thou hast followed the Baalim. Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto Mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the Asherah four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table.*

Mount Carmel.—This is the first mention of this mountain Carmel, both physically and historically so celebrated. It is a long ridge stretching in a north-westerly direction between Sharon and Esdraelon to the sea.¹ "Carmel's long sweep invests him with the appearance of having *come* there. Some hills suggest immovableness, and others, with their 'long greyhound backs,' are full of motion. It is the peculiarity of Carmel to combine these effects and to impress those who look upon him with the sense of one long stride over the plain and firm foothold upon the sea." It is the first of Israel's hills to meet the rains, and they give it of their best, so that its verdant clothing, *the excellency of Carmel* (Isa. xxxv. 2), became proverbial and symbolic.

Carmel as a Sanctuary.—"But it is as a sanctuary that the long hill is best remembered. In its separation from other hills, its position on the sea, its visibleness from all quarters of the country, in its uselessness for war or traffic, in its profusion of flowers, its high platforms and groves with their glorious prospects of land and sea, Carmel must have been a place

¹ G. A. Smith, *Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, p. 339.

of retreat and of worship from the earliest times." It was claimed for Baal, but even before Elijah's time an altar to Jehovah had testified to the true God. It probably stood on the eastern summit, commanding the last view of the Mediterranean Sea and the first view of the great plain of Esdraelon, possibly on the rock which still bears the name *The Sacrifice*. On this same spot, probably, long afterwards, Vespasian sacrificed when commanding the Roman armies in Palestine, and thither the Druses still come in yearly pilgrimage. Upon it now, as on a spot whose sanctity they both equally felt, the prophets of the rival faiths met, four hundred and fifty for Baal and *one* for Jehovah.

Elijah and the Priests of Baal.—Alone as he was, Elijah faced the people with the momentous question, with a suggestion in its words of the antics they would presently witness round Baal's altar, *How long halt (or dance) ye between two opinions? If Jehovah be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.*

The Appeal to Baal.¹—With every precaution against fraud Elijah then directed the followers of Baal to prepare a bullock for sacrifice. He would do the same, and the God that answered by fire was to be proclaimed the true, the only God. "Every incident that follows enhances the contrast between the false and the true in this grand ordeal." As the Mussulman Dervishes work themselves into a frenzy by whirling round and invoking Allah, so the prophets of Baal (those of Ashtaroth do not appear) performed their wild dances round the altar, or upon it, springing up, or sinking down, with the fantastic gestures that only Orientals can command, and screaming with that sustained energy which believes that it will be heard for its much speaking, from morn to noon, *O Baal, hear us! But there was no voice, nor any that answered.*

Then Elijah began to ridicule them. It was noon, when gods and men under that burning sun may be thought to have withdrawn for a siesta. So he mockingly cheers them on, *Cry aloud; for he is a god: either he is musing, or he is gone aside, or is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked.* "They took him at his word. Like the Dervishes who eat glass, seize living snakes with their teeth, throw themselves prostrate for their mounted chief to ride

¹ Stanley, *Jewish Church*, Lect. xxx. vol. ii. 301-303.

over them ; like the Corybantian priests of Cybele, like the Fakirs of India," they now in their frenzied state gashed themselves with swords and lances till they streamed with blood, yelling all the while till the time of the evening oblation ; *but there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.*

The Appeal to Jehovah.—"And now comes the contrast of the calm trust and tranquillity of the true prophet." Elijah repaired the old altar with twelve symbolic stones, for it was to the God of the patriarchs and the twelve tribes he was going to pray, and, adding a precaution against deceit not demanded from the other side, he made a trench round the altar, and had it filled with water from a spring which seems to have escaped the effect of the drought. Then through the stillness of evening there went up to heaven the memorable prayer, *O Jehovah, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that Thou art God in Israel, and that I am Thy servant, and that I have done all these things at Thy word. Hear me, O Jehovah, hear me ; that this people may know that Thou Jehovah art God, and that Thou hast turned their heart back again. Then the fire of Jehovah fell, and consumed the burnt-offering, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces ; and they said, Jehovah, He is God ; Jehovah, He is God.*

Slaughter of the Priests of Baal.—Prostrate on their faces they had at last made their decision. It was a national proclamation of faith. Jehovah was Israel's God, and the word of Jehovah's prophet was now, for the time at least, law. And in that sudden revulsion of feeling, as might be expected, those who had been victims of persecution became persecutors in turn. The prophets of Baal were seized, they were swept away by the excited multitude. Elijah himself led them down the slopes to the gorge of the Kishon, and there he slew them.

End of the Drought.¹—And Ahab—what were his reflections ? No confession of his is recorded. But Elijah bade him hasten to the sacrificial feast, for rain was at last coming, and coming in abundance. Elijah did not eat or drink, but went to the top of Carmel, and there with his head between his knees, "in the Oriental attitude of entire abstraction," he waited what the

¹ Stanley, *ubi supra*, 305, 306.

watcher on the cliff's brow might see. Seven times he looked. Seven times there was nothing. The sky was still clear, the sea was still calm. At last out of the far western horizon there rose a little cloud as small as a man's hand, but the well-known prelude to a coming tempest. "The cry of the boy from his mountain watch had hardly been uttered, when the storm broke upon the plain, and the torrent of Kishon began to swell. The king had not a moment to lose if he would reach Jezreel. He mounted his chariot at the foot of the hill." And as he rode through the growing blackness of the tempest, Elijah, touched by a supporting hand, ran before the chariot, as the Bedawin of his own Gilead would still run, to the entrance of Jezreel.

LXXVI. JEHOSHAPHAT AT JERUSALEM

2 CHRON. xvii., xix., xx. 1-31.

Poise the cause in justice's equal scales,
Whose beam stands sure, whose rightful cause prevails.

JEHOSHAPHAT. *About 900 B.C. Reigned twenty-five years.*

In the meantime a movement of a very different kind had been going on in the southern kingdom. It did not originate with the prophetic order, but with the crown. It was a judicial, not a religious, reform.

His Reforming Spirit.—Jehoshaphat had succeeded his father, Asa, two or three years after Ahab's accession at Samaria. We are still about 900 B.C. The Book of Kings passes his reign over with the briefest notice, except when he is brought into relation with the northern kingdom. But the Book of Chronicles, which always has most to say about Judah, and loves to idealise the past, and paint it in colours borrowed from the author's present, has a long account not only of the wars he carried on in alliance with Ahab, but of victories of his own, and of various improvements introduced in the mode of governing and administering justice. If some of the details of the description really belong to a later order of things, there can be little doubt that Jehoshaphat lived in tradition as a Reformer, and that the narrative of *Jehu the son of Hanani, which is*

inserted in "*The Book of the Kings of Israel*," was not the only history of his reforms extant when the Chronicler wrote.

Azubah, the daughter of Shilhi, we are told, was his mother, and in regard to religious observances *he walked in the way of Asa, his father, and turned not aside from it, doing that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah.* He still, however, permitted worship and sacrifice on the high places, so that the piety of the day was not that of the Chronicler's time.

Judicial Reforms.—"Jehovah has judged" is the meaning of the name Jehoshaphat, and it expresses the ideas which filled the king's mind. He organised a judicial system, setting up courts of law in all the fortified cities of his land; and in Jerusalem a supreme court, under the presidency of *Amariah, the chief priest in all matters of Jehovah,* and *Zebediah the son of Ishmael, the ruler of the house of Judah in all the king's matter.*

The Priests appointed Judges.—Here we find for the first time priests formally intrusted with those judicial functions which it is possible they may at times have previously exercised. Eli was judge as well as priest. David, according to one notice in Chronicles (1 Chron. xxiii. 4), had appointed Levites judges, but here we have priests also appointed to similar functions. And to ensure competent legal knowledge in these courts, Jehoshaphat sent commissioners with the Book of the Law through all the cities of Judah to teach the people. What this book contained we do not know, but doubtless the Book of the Covenant or Alliance (Ex. xx. 23–xxiii. 33) and the Decalogue formed part of it.

His Charge to the Judges.—And the charge he gave his newly-appointed judges was worthy of his name. *Consider what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for Jehovah, and He is with you in the judgment. Now, therefore, let a fear of Jehovah be upon you; take heed, and do it; for there is no iniquity with Jehovah our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts.* And it was all summed up in this noble direction, *Deal courageously, and Jehovah be with the good.*

Military Measures.—Other administrative measures are attributed to this monarch. He built castles and cities of store throughout Judah, and, following the precedent wisely set by Rehoboam, he placed in them his six younger sons, as well as other princes chosen from the host. These were to serve a

military purpose. Garrisons were placed in the cities with treasure in reserve. Their names, which are given, are not otherwise famous, but their appointment testifies to the anxiety on Jehoshaphat's part to give his country a well-organised government.

Jehoshaphat's Prestige—Alliance with Ahab.—These early days brought no foreign complications to disturb the peace needed for Jehoshaphat's measures of civil and religious reform. Indeed, the precautions he took against attack from his immediate neighbours seem to have had the effect of overawing them, even if they had been inclined to attack Judah. The Philistines, indeed, and the Arabians, appear to have been tributaries of the Hebrew king, and wealth flowed into his coffers, so that he *had riches and honour in abundance*. This success made his friendship still more desirable for Ahab, and the alliance which the two monarchs now formed was of the strongest.

Inroad of Ammonites and Moabites.—Later in his reign, however, the nomad tribes of Northern Arabia, joined by detachments of Ammonites and Moabites, ventured on a raid into his territory. They were encamped on the heights above the Dead Sea in the palm-groves of Engedi, when messengers came with the news to Jerusalem. *There cometh a great multitude against thee from beyond the sea, from Edom* (the reading, Syria, arises from the confusion of two Hebrew letters closely resembling each other), *and behold, they be in Hazazon-Tamar* (the same is Engedi). The first alarm of the king passed away, as he turned to meet the trouble in a religious spirit, proclaiming a fast and gathering Judah together to seek help from Jehovah. Then upon Jahaziel, a Levite, *came the spirit of Jehovah in the midst of the congregation and he said: Thus saith Jehovah unto you, Fear not ye, neither be dismayed, by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's.*

Jehoshaphat's Victory.—Accordingly the king marched forth with his army singing, *Give thanks unto Jehovah, for his mercy endureth for ever*. And sudden panic seized the marauders, and the tribal jealousy, always ready to flame out, set them one against the other, so that a complete victory was gained almost without a blow. *And when Judah came to the watch-tower of the wilderness they looked upon the multitude; and behold, they were dead bodies fallen to the earth, and there were none that escaped.* The booty was tremendous, and the opening of the

hills where it was collected, and where *they blessed Jehovah*, was known as the Valley of Blessing. The triumphant march home took the form of a great religious ceremony, for *they came to Jerusalem with psalteries, and harps, and trumpets unto the house of Jehovah. And the fear of God*, we are told, *was upon all the kingdoms of the countries, when they heard that Jehovah fought against the enemies of Israel. So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet : his God gave him rest round about.*

LXXVII. ELIJAH AT HOREB. SYRIAN WARS

1 KINGS xix., xx.

Back, then, complainer : loathe thy life no more,
 Nor deem thyself upon a desert shore,
 Because the rocks the nearer prospect close ;
 Yet in fall'n Israel are there hearts and eyes,
 That day by day in prayer like thine arise ;
 Thou know'st them not, but their Creator knows.

AHAB'S REIGN—*continued.*

Flight of Elijah.—The story of Elijah, it has been said, is, like the story of Athanasius, full of sudden reverses.¹ We left him in an hour of triumph, dictating to a repentant people and an awestruck king. We find him fleeing for his life before the menace of a woman. *Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to-morrow about this time.*

He is fed by Angels.—The prophet fled, and naturally fled south, passing through Judah, not yet in such close alliance with Ahab as to make it unsafe. At Beersheba he left his solitary attendant, according to tradition, the Zidonian boy whom he had restored to life, the future prophet Jonah. *But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness.* He was oppressed by the solitude, and all the loneliness and apparent hopelessness of his position came upon him with overwhelming force. Under the common desert shrub, a *rothem* bush, or flowering broom, he lay down, as he thought, to die. *It is enough : now, O Lord, take away my life ; for I am not better than my fathers.* But he did not die. He slept, and in his sleep came the touch of

¹ Stanley, *Jewish Church*, Lect. xxx. vol. ii. 306.

an angel waking him, and a voice saying, *Arise and eat. And he looked, and behold, there was at his head a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water.* The angelic ministration was repeated, and *in the strength of that meat he went forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God.*

And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there. Tradition points out the spot, a secluded basin beneath the summit of what is called "the Mount of Moses." But the Sinaitic traditions do not date back beyond the monastic age, and we are still ignorant of the locality of the giving of the Law and of the revelation that was now to come to Elijah. All that we know is that this was a second and a better manifestation of the Divine. Its first intimation was a call, a question, such as may come to all

Who listen, mid the din
Of voices, for the voice within.

What doest thou here, Elijah? Here, far from prophetic work, from the ruined altars waiting to be rebuilt, from the people lately turned to the true religion and wanting guidance and support? He has only the answer of despair, a despair which can forget all that happened at Carmel.

I have been very jealous for the Jehovah the God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, thrown down Thine altars, and slain Thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.

The Still Small Voice.—Then he was called forth to hear, under the open sky, the answer to his doubts. How should it come? In a tempest of wrath? in an upheaval of society? in a devouring flame? No. *Jehovah passed by*, but he was not in the *strong wind* that rent the mountains, nor in the *earthquake*, nor in the *fire*. Disappointed once more, the prophet retires again to the cave. *And after the fire a still small voice.* And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And once more the question was repeated, *What doest thou here, Elijah?* and the old answer given again, "I have been jealous, but I have failed; let me die."

The Divine communications that now came blend with the visions which preceded them. One cannot be understood without the other. They both alike contain the special

message to Elijah, and the universal message to mankind at large. Men are apt to look upon the excitement and violence that attend triumphant zeal as signs of success. But the storm, and the earthquake, and the fire, may pass without revealing God.

The onward march of Israel's destiny to give a true religion to the world depended, not so much on the destruction of Baal's prophets at Carmel, as on facts of Divine providence which the prophet had overlooked. Nor was his despondency a reason for his death. Its cure lay in taking up the tasks which still awaited him. The complaint of Elijah, as has been said, "carries with it the complaint of many a devoted heart and gifted mind, when the world has turned against them, when their words and deeds have been misinterpreted, when they have struggled in vain against the wickedness, the folly, the stupidity of mankind." But there is always something left to do for God, were it only to suffer in silence and trust. And Elijah's work was by no means over. There was a successor to appoint in the prophetic line, and kings both in Israel and Syria to be anointed, who were, each in his way, to be agents in the fulfilment of the Divine purpose. *And the LORD said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus; and when thou comest thou shalt anoint Hazael to be king over Syria; and Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel; and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-Meholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room.*

The Faithful Remnant.—Nor was this all. Elijah had thought himself alone, the sole surviving true prophet. But it was not so. Deep down in the heart of the nation there was still fidelity to the truth. Unknown to Elijah, unknown to each other, were still *seven thousand, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.* God, indeed, is never without a witness. There is always good in the midst of evil.

Of the three commissions with which the great prophet was sent back from solitude and despair to work and hope again among men, one only was actually executed by himself. The anointing of the kings was left for his successor. But this successor was at once sought out.

The Calling of Elisha.—*So he departed thence, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of*

oxen before him, and he with the twelfth: and Elijah passed over unto him and cast his mantle upon him.

The significant act was understood, in spite of the reserve which was too habitual to be at once broken through. "*Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee.*" "*Go back again: for what have I done to thee?*" It is the solitary nature still asserting itself. The majestic figure of Elijah was well known to the sons of the prophets, but he stood always apart from them. Presently, when they gather in numbers at the summons of Ahab, he is conspicuous by his absence. Towering above all the order, for an order the prophets had now become, he does not formally belong to it. He is not, as Elisha became, the head of any of its schools. But he has now attached to him one close and faithful companion at least. Elisha stayed only to give a farewell feast to his people, *Then he arose and went after Elijah, and ministered to him.*

Our narrative suddenly leaves Elijah, and going back to the Court of Israel, takes up Ahab's Syrian wars. It would appear that, without aspiring to any position beyond its powers, the dynasty of Ahab at Samaria held a very prominent and honourable place in the Syrian world. The country of Moab paid tribute to it, and was firmly held in subjection. The Ammonites also seem to have obeyed it. The marriage between Ahab and Jezebel brought it into relations with the reigning family of Tyre.¹

Ahab's War with Benhadad of Damascus.—There was, however, long trouble with the Aramæan kingdom on the north-east. For quite a century the kingdom of which Damascus was capital had attained great importance, and the city itself was a centre of very brilliant industrial civilisation. The good things of Damascus were proverbial; and from that time the word "damask" has been used to denote a class of rich materials. Its kings had only bent before Israel for a moment. War between the two powers had been almost perpetual, and the division between the two Israelitish kingdoms had been singularly favourable to the arms of the Damascenes. Benhadad, probably the son of the monarch of the same name with whom Asa formed a league, invaded the kingdom of the north with one of the strongest armies that

¹ Renan, *History of the People of Israel*, bk. iv. ch. viii.

had been seen in those countries at that time. He had *thirty-two kings with him*, and a formidable force of cavalry. Benhadad marched victoriously through Samaria, Ahab parleying with him, and at first submitting to rather severe conditions. *Thus saith Benhadad, Thy silver and thy gold is mine ; thy wives also and thy children, even the goodliest, are mine. And the king of Israel answered and said, It is according to thy saying, my Lord, O king ; I am thine, and all that I have.* This submission only made Benhadad more exacting and insolent in his demands. But the spirit of the *elders and all the people* was roused, and they urged resistance. The Israelite king's reply became proverbial. *Let not him that girdeth on his armour boast himself as he that putteth it off.*

Retreat of Benhadad.—The prophets, too, interfered, and a vigorous attack from the people of Samaria decided the fate of the first campaign. Benhadad retired, fully determined to return and to continue the struggle, not in the mountainous regions of Samaria, where his cavalry could not act, but in the plains of Jezreel. *Their god is a god of the hills*, said his officers to him, and that is the reason they have defeated us. Let us attack them in the plain, and we shall certainly conquer them. He also received sensible advice to replace his thirty-two kings by an equal number of captains under his orders, that is, to strengthen his military organisation much as we have seen the German empire doing in our own time.

Renewal of the War.—A year later Benhadad made a second advance with his Aramæans, and took up his position in Aphek. At present it is impossible to fix on the locality. The name Aphek (or Aphik) suggests a confluence of water-courses, and the fact that it was in a plain country suitable for the action of cavalry, points to the district where so many battles were fought about the waters of Kishon. Whatever the country, the Syrians were so numerous that they filled it, *and the children of Israel encamped before them like two little flocks of kids.* For seven days the unequal armies watched each other. The Israelites were not without encouragement, for a man of God promised them victory.

Thus saith Jehovah, Because the Syrians have said, Jehovah is a God of the hills, but He is not a god of the valleys ; therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into thine hand ; and ye shall know that I am Jehovah.

Victory of Ahab—The Treaty of Peace.—The action that followed was for a time decisive. The Syrians were routed with immense loss, and Benhadad had to flee and then make terms.

The kings of Israel had the character, with their Aramæan neighbours, of *merciful kings*. But Benhadad found Ahab more than merciful,—complacent, and eager for peaceful relations. *Is he yet alive? he is my brother*, he said to the Syrian envoys who came as suppliants in sackcloth. They caught at the friendly words, and a meeting of the two kings took place. It resulted in an arrangement by which the Syrian was to restore to Israel the conquests of his father, and Ahab's merchants were to get the same privilege as had been accorded by him to the Damascenes, a quarter for themselves in the Aramæan city.

The Treaty denounced.—This arrangement gave the greatest offence to the prophetic order. One member of it, who is nameless, resorted to one of the striking symbolic acts, by which prophetic lessons were frequently enforced, and make the king convict himself. With some difficulty he got one of his fellows to give him some severe wounds. Then with his headband over his eyes he went to Ahab with a pretended story, that he had failed to keep a prisoner intrusted to him. Ahab pronounced that the offence carried its own condemnation. *And he hasted, and took the headband away from his eyes; and the king of Israel discerned that he was of the prophets. And he said unto him, Thus said Jehovah, Because thou hast let go out of thy hand the man whom I had devoted to destruction, therefore thy life shall go for his life, and thy people for his people.*

And the king of Israel went to his house heavy and displeased, and came to Samaria.

LXXVIII. THE COURT OF SAMARIA

1 KINGS xxi.

All thy garments smell of myrrh and aloes and cassia ;
 Out of ivory palaces stringed instruments have made thee glad.
 Kings daughters are among thy honourable women ;
 At thy right hand doth stand the queen in gold of Ophir.

AHAB'S REIGN—*continued.*

The Palace of Samaria.—Three years the truce continued, and Ahab appears to have spent the time in embellishing his palace at Samaria, and enlarging his parks, a work in which he took great delight. But it did not give pleasure to those of his subjects who were attached to the old simple patriarchal life, and an incident occurred which brought Elijah once more on the scene, and called forth the final doom of the House of Omri. It is characteristic of the sacred narrative that this was immediately connected, “not with idolatry, nor with the persecution of the prophets, but with a tyrannical endeavour to override the scruples of a private citizen, and an act of injustice against a subject.”¹

Naboth's Vineyard.—“On the eastern slope of the hill of Jezreel, immediately outside the walls, was a smooth plot of ground, which Ahab, in his desire for the improvement of his favourite residence, wished to turn into a garden. But it belonged to Naboth, a Jezreelite of distinguished birth, who sturdily refused, perhaps with something of a religious scruple, to part with it for any price or equivalent. *The Lord forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee.*

Jezebel procures Naboth's destruction.—“The refusal brought on a peculiar mood of sadness, described on two occasions in Ahab, and in no one else. He came into his house *heavy and displeased. And he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread.* But in his palace there was one who cared nothing for the scruples which tormented the conscience even of the worst of the kings of Israel. In the pride of her conscious superiority to the weakness of her husband, Jezebel came to him and said, *Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel? Arise, and eat*

¹ Stanley, *Jewish Church*, Lect. xxx. vol. ii. 311-315.

bread, and let thine heart be merry. I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite. It is the same contrast true to nature that we know so well in Aegisthus and Clytemnestra, in Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, where the feebler resolution of the man has been urged to the last crime by the bolder and more relentless spirit of the woman. She wrote a warrant in Ahab's name. She gave the hint to the chief of the nobles of the city. An assembly was called, at the head of which Naboth, by virtue of his high position, was placed. There the charge of treason was brought against him, and, according to the forms of the Jewish law, two or three necessary witnesses were produced. The sentence was pronounced. The whole family were involved in ruin. Naboth and his sons in the darkness of the night were dragged out of the city and were stoned. Then they sent to Jezebel saying, *Naboth is stoned and is dead*; and she repeated to Ahab all that he cared to hear. *Naboth is not alive, but dead."*

And now the scene shows us the king riding in state to take possession. With him ride Bidkar and Jehu. They near the city of Jezreel, and now the green terraces appear which Ahab may call his own, the vineyard waiting for its new possessor.

Elijah denounces Ahab.—"But there is a solitary figure standing on the ground, as though the dead Naboth had risen from his bloody grave to warn off the king from his unlawful gain. It is Elijah. As in the most pathetic of Grecian dramas, the unjust sentence has no sooner been pronounced on the unfortunate Antigone, than Tiresias rises up to pronounce the curse on the Theban king, so in this grander than any Grecian tragedy the well-known prophet appears to utter the doom of the house of Ahab. He comes, we know not whence. The word of Jehovah has brought him. Few and short were the words that fell from those awful lips, and they are variously reported; but they must have fallen like thunderbolts on that royal company. They were never forgotten. We shall see them recalled presently over the dead body of a son of Ahab.

Ahab's remorse.—"But it was on Ahab himself that the curse fell with the heaviest weight. He burst at once into the familiar cry, *Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?* The prophet and the king parted to meet no more. But the king's last act was an act of penitence. On every anniversary of Naboth's death he wore signs of mourning, and the prophet's words

were words of mercy. It was as if the revelation of the still small voice was becoming clearer and clearer, for in the heart of Ahab there was a sense of better things, and that sense is recognised and blest."

LXXIX. ALLIANCE

1 KINGS xxii. ; 2 KINGS i. ; 2 CHRON. xviii., xx. 31-37.

Be friends awhile, and both conjointly bend
Your sharpest deeds of malice on this town.

AHAB'S REIGN—*continued*.

A motive for Ahab's friendly attitude to Benhadad, which so exasperated the prophets, has been found in the suggestion that they were driven to unite by a common danger. An inscription of Shalmaneser II., discovered on the banks of the Tigris, records a great victory gained by him at a place called Karkar, over a coalition of Syrian princes, among whose names occurs that of Ahab of Israel. Assyriologists fix the date of this victory in the decade from 860 to 850, and, if the name is correct, Ahab's accession must be brought down to about 870. But the Assyrian scribe may not have been accurately informed as to the reigning monarch at Samaria.¹ In other inscriptions Jehu is referred to as of the house of Omri, although he overthrew it, and the prince who shared in the defeat at Karkar may have been Jehoram, Ahab's son. In this case the co-operation of Israel with Damascus would be, so far as Israel was concerned, the involuntary consequence of the unfortunate battle at Ramoth. There are other besides chronological reasons which make for this supposition.

Close Alliance with Jehoshaphat.—The Bible leaves us to imagine a cause for the offensive and defensive alliance which was undoubtedly made between the two Israelite kingdoms. The monarchs of Judah and Israel had been on friendly terms ever since their accession, and the marriage of Jehoram of Judah with Ahab's daughter Athaliah now drew them closer together. And when Ahab had broken with Benhadad, and was planning his expedition to recover Ramoth-Gilead from the Syrians, he naturally summoned Jehoshaphat to his aid.

¹ Kittel, *History of the Hebrews*, bk. iii. ch. ii.

The Recovery of Ramoth-Gilead planned.—We know nothing of the position of Ramoth, except that it was on the debatable ground north of the Yarmuk ; but its importance is shown by the length of the struggle for its possession.

Jehoshaphat readily agreed to Ahab's overture. *I am as thou art, my people as thy people, my horses as thy horses.* But he insisted on an oracle, *Inquire, I pray thee, at the word of Jehovah to-day.*

The False Prophets.—The days of Urim and Thummim had gone by. Prophetic inspiration had taken its place, and Ahab assembled the prophets together, about four hundred men, and formally put the question to them, *Shall I go to Ramoth-Gilead to battle, or shall I forbear?* There was a unanimous cry, *Go up ; for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king.* But Jehoshaphat was unsatisfied. He may have thought these were Baal's prophets, not Jehovah's. They had not used Jehovah's name in their reply. Accordingly, he asked, *Is there not here, besides, a prophet of Jehovah, that we may inquire of him?* Ahab acknowledged that there was, Micaiah ben Imlah, but said he disliked him, because his predictions were always unfavourable. But he was, at Jehoshaphat's urgent request, summoned. The messengers who summoned him begged him to agree with the rest of the prophets ; but, like Balaam, he protested he could but speak the Divine message.

Micaiah denounces them.—However, when they reached the open space at the gate of Samaria, where the kings were sitting, and the formal question was put to him, he replied as the other prophets had done, only using Jehovah's name instead of Lord (*Adonai*), which they had used. Ahab noticed the ironical tone in his voice, and adjured him to speak only truth, upon which Micaiah painted a picture of Israel scattered like sheep on the mountains, their master gone ; thus once more prophesying *no good, but evil*, concerning Ahab, as he bitterly remarked to his ally. The scene recalls the angry remonstrance of Agamemnon against Calchas—

Angur accurst ! denouncing mischief still,
Prophet of plagues, for ever boding ill !
Still must that tongue some wounding message bring,
And still thy priestly pride provoke thy king ?

Micaiah, unmoved, related a remarkable vision of Jehovah

surrounded by His court, asking for some volunteer to entice Ahab to his ruin, and the acceptance of the task by a lying spirit who would be in the mouth of the other prophets.

This challenge of their veracity was taken up by one Zedekiah ben Chenaanah, and an altercation took place, which ended in the committal of Micaiah to prison till the king should *come in peace*. As he was led away, Micaiah appealed to all the people to watch for the fulfilment of his prediction that this would never be.

Defeat and Death of Ahab.—Ahab was so much affected by the adverse prophecy that he went into the battle that soon followed disguised, a stratagem which nearly cost Jehoshaphat his life, since it drew all the attack on him. Nor did it save Ahab, for in spite of an order to fight only against the king of Israel, a Syrian, by tradition, Naaman, *drew a bow at a venture*, and mortally wounded him. But he manfully kept his place in his chariot till the sun went down and defeat was inevitable. As at last he sank down exhausted, the cry went forth—

Ish el iro,

Ish el artso,

Every man to his own city,

Every man to his own country,

For the king is dead (adds the LXX.).

The corpse was taken to Samaria for burial, and the blood-stained chariot was washed in a piece of water known as *the pool*, and when the scavenger dogs of the city were seen lapping there, it was felt that the doom pronounced by Elijah on the house of Ahab had received its first fulfilment.

Character of Ahab.—A better Ahab than the judgment of the pious of his day allowed him to be, shines through a casual notice here and there. He was undoubtedly brave, and, as he imagined, patriotic. He could feel bitter remorse for deeds to which the ambition of his queen impelled him. He had a taste for art, and was devoted to civilised ideas. But he was too tolerant, and too acquiescent before another's will. In a word, he was not in sympathy with the true mission of Israel, and appears to have thought the worship of Baal as good as that of Jehovah.

JEHOSHAPHAT'S REIGN—*continued*.

Jehoshaphat was not frightened from his alliance with the northern kingdom by the ill success at Ramoth. He continued

on friendly terms with Ahaziah, Ahab's successor, and, according to the Chronicler, joined him in a commercial enterprise. His suzerainty over Edom, confirmed by his victory in the Valley of Beracah, gave him the command of the Arabah, and the time seemed ripe for an attempt to revive the trade with Ophir established by Solomon. But the prophetic voice of Judah, which had been silent in regard to the alliance with Ahab, found expression against this expedition in the person of Eliezer of Maresah, and a storm which wrecked the ships that *were broken at Ezion-Geber* confirmed his disapproval. Possibly the statement in Kings that Ahaziah begged in vain for permission to join in the undertaking, points to a second attempt made by the king of Judah alone.

ISRAEL—AHAZIAH.

Reigned two years.

Revolt of Moab under Mesha.—Ahaziah succeeded his father Ahab about 870. His mother, Jezebel, was still all powerful, and Ahaziah *walked in her way*, even exceeding his father in disloyalty to Jehovah. The decline in Israel's strength, owing to the ill-starred expedition against Ramoth, was taken advantage of by Moab to throw off the suzerainty, and free herself from the tribute of sheep and rams which she annually paid. Mesha, the reigning prince, a man of great capacity, has left us, on the famous Moabite stone, an account of his successful revolt. The stone, which was found at Dibon, Mesha's capital, is in the Louvre. It was broken during negotiations for its purchase from the Arabs, but the greater part was recovered. Mesha tells his story thus:—

The Moabite Stone.—*I am the Dibonite Mesha, the son of Chemoshmelech, king of Moab. My father was king of Moab for thirty years, and I became king after my father, and I have built this monument to Chemosh in KHRH in remembrance of my deliverance (a play on his own name which means deliverance), for he delivered me from all the . . . , and let me see my desire upon all my enemies. Omri was king of Israel, and he oppressed Moab a long time, because Chemosh was angry with his land. And his son succeeded him, and he said, also, I will oppress Moab. In my days he spoke . . . , but I have*

seen my desire upon him and upon his house, and now Israel is ruined, ruined for ever.

Then follows a list of recaptured towns and other Moabite successes.

Accident to Ahaziah—Appearance of Elijah.—In addition to these disasters, a severe misfortune soon befell Ahaziah. He *fell down through the lattice in his upper chamber that was in Samaria.* Anxious for an oracle about his chance of recovery, he sent to inquire, not of Jehovah, but of Baal-Zebub, god of Ekron. This was an enormity which only the reappearance of Elijah on the scene could adequately rebuke.¹ “There was a sudden apparition of a strange being on the heights of Carmel to the messengers whom Ahaziah had sent to consult the oracle. They were passing probably along the haunted strand between the sea and the mountain. They heard the warning voice. They returned to their master. Their description could apply only to one man. It must be the wild prophet of the desert, whom he had heard described by his father and grandfather. Troop after troop were sent to arrest the enemy of the royal house, to seize the lion in his den. On the top of Carmel they saw the solitary form, but he was not to be taken by human force. Stroke after stroke of celestial fire was to destroy the armed bands.” But the captain of the third fifty appealed for his own life and that of his soldiers, the innocent victims of another’s sin. *And the angel of the LORD said unto Elijah, Go down with him, be not afraid of him.*

Death of Ahaziah.—Then the prophet went to deliver his message of doom. *Thou shalt not come down from the bed whither thou art gone up. Thou shalt surely die.* And Ahaziah died after a brief reign of two years.

¹ Stanley, *Jewish Church*, Lect. XXXI. vol. ii. 319.

LXXX. TRANSLATION OF ELIJAH

2 KINGS ii. 1-18.

Thy work is done ;
And no more as a servant, but the guest
Of God, thou enterest thy eternal rest.

The Prophet of Fire.—We always connect Elijah with fire. According to the Jewish legends, he was at his birth wrapt in swaddling bands of fire and fed with flames. Jesus, the son of Sirach, begins his account of him with characteristic abruptness. *Then stood up Elijah the prophet as fire, and his word burned like a lamp* (Ecclus. xlviii. 1). *Three times*, he goes on to remind us, *he brought down fire*. In a fiery storm-cloud he was to depart, the prophet of fire to the end.

He seems to have had a monition of his end. He heard God calling him once more, and he started with his attendant Elisha from Gilgal. This is plainly not the Gilgal of Israel's early camp by the Jordan, but a place probably on the mountains of Ephraim, from which it was a descent to the place they were to visit, for *they went down to Bethel*.

Elijah visits the Schools of the Prophets.—It is very instructive to find the solitary Elijah, the lonely man, who all through his career had acted independently, asking for no support from the prophetic guilds, and, apparently, never in communication with them, now, as his earthly work draws to an end, visiting the schools of the prophets with his disciple. It is one more sign of the effect of Horeb's vision upon him. His cry is no more, *I only am left*. He recognises, at least for his successor, whose mission is now to begin, the need of the interchange of thought and sympathy with others.

And yet the old instinct of loneliness remains, and again and again on the memorable journey he begs Elisha to *tarry* and let him go to his mysterious end alone. At some unknown spot between Gilgal and Bethel, at Bethel itself, and again at Jericho, the request was made, always to receive the same answer. *As Jehovah liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee* ; and this, although Elisha had been warned of what he already foresaw, that *Jehovah would take his master from his head to-day*. *Yea, I know it*, he said ; *hold ye your peace*.

At length the Jordan was reached. Fifty of the sons of the prophets had posted themselves *over against them afar off*, but on some commanding eminence near Jericho, to watch what would ensue. In the clear atmosphere of Palestine sight reaches far, and the two wayfarers would be in view until they descended the wooded sides of the ravine, at the bottom of which the river flows, and as they mounted the slopes of Gilead beyond. What was passing at the river itself they could not see. *And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground.*

Elisha's last Request.—Once more Elijah stands on his own side of the river. The wild Gileadite, who was homeless while he lived, has come home to die—so, perhaps he thinks, to die as he had so often in his despondency wished;—certainly to be *taken away*. But ere he is separated from his friend and successor he turned to him to ask his last wish. ¹“One only gift was in Elisha's mind to ask: *I pray thee, let a double portion*—if it be only two morsels, two-thirds, the right of a firstborn son—*of thy spirit be upon me.*”

“It was a hard thing that he had asked. But it was granted, on one condition. If he was able to retain to the end the same devoted perseverance, and to keep his eye set and steadfast on the departing prophet, the gift would be his.” *And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, which parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.*

The Passing of Elijah.—*My father, my father, the chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!* So Elisha cried as he saw his master and friend so wonderfully snatched from earth and him. It was the expression of his own loss and his country's, his own affection, and the regret and reverence of Israel. It seemed as if all the defensive strength of the kingdom had gone with Elijah.

His mantle had fallen, and Elisha, a worthy successor, but in almost every outward feature different from his master, succeeded him. But the same prophetic spirit was his. *Where is Jehovah the God of Elijah?* he cried, as he smote the Jordan on his return, and the waters *divided hither and thither* once more, *and Elisha went over.*

¹ Stanley, *Jewish Church*, Lect. xxxi. vol. ii. 321, 322.

Reluctantly he yielded to the importunity of the sons of the prophets who met him, and allowed them to conduct a vain search for the vanished saint. *Three days they sought and found him not.*

Expectation of his Return.—It was natural that legend should gather round a figure so marvellous, even in the sober narrative of Kings, as that of Elijah. In the imaginations of both Jews and Mussulmans, he hovers as the Immortal One, the Eternal Wanderer, who shall appear ever and anon to set right the things of earth, and repeat the experience of ages past. Awe, as well as hope, mingled in the expectation. Abdallah Pasha, the fierce lord of Acre, almost died of terror from a vision, as he believed, of the prophet sitting on the top of Carmel. We can even discern the mingled feeling in the Gospel notice of his expected return. In his story, destruction waits on his word as often as blessing. But the blessing was there still, and his reappearance was hoped for as well as feared. A seat is still placed for him by the Jews to superintend the circumcision of their children. At the Passover, the cup is still placed on the table for him and the door left open for his entrance. "When goods are found and no owner comes, when difficulties arise and no solution appears, the answer is, 'Put them by till Elijah comes.'"

As a prophet, Elijah stands between the old and the new. The prophetic order has already come into existence, but he stands almost outside it, and towers high above it. Yet through Elisha he belongs to it.

LXXXI. KINGS IN BATTLE

2 KINGS iii.

For in a theme so bloody-faced as this,
Conjecture, expectation, and surmise
Of aids uncertain should not be admitted.

ISRAEL—JEHORAM, or JORAM.

About 870 B.C. Reigned twelve years.

Ahaziah had no son, and was succeeded by his brother Jehoram (or Joram), who persevered in the policy of his

father and mother. He certainly destroyed one pillar that had been erected to Baal, but his religious conduct was not in other respects different from that of his house, and the sentence of the prophetic writer on him is, *that he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord.*

ISRAEL AND JUDAH.

Alliance with Judah and Edom against Moab.—With his general policy, however, there was no fault to find. It was not to be expected that he could endure the revolt of Moab, and he called upon Jehoshaphat, in the terms of the alliance between the two kingdoms, to join him in an expedition against that country. Another ally was found in the king of Edom, whom Jehoshaphat summoned to his assistance as his vassal. He appears to have been recently invested with the royal title by his suzerain, having previously been only a kind of prefect. He was accordingly ready to help in every way, and the allied armies chose a line of march through his territory.

Difficulties of the Expedition.—This had its disadvantages, for after a march of seven days, the allies found themselves in a region where *there was no water for the host, nor for the beasts that followed them.* In this difficulty a sense of his disloyalty to Jehovah smote Jehoram, and he said, *Alas! for Jehovah hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab.*

Elisha's Advice sought.—But Jehoshaphat, as he had done before the expedition to Ramoth-Gilead, instantly asked, *Is there not here a prophet of Jehovah, that we may inquire of Jehovah by him? And one of the king of Israel's servants answered and said, Elisha the son of Shaphat is here, which poured water on the hands of Elijah. And Jehoshaphat said, The word of Jehovah is with him.*

He rebukes Jehoram.—Instead of summoning the prophet, the three kings showed their esteem for him by going together to consult him. He took the opportunity of rebuking his own monarch, the king of Israel, for his half measures in regard to religious reformation, bidding him go to his own prophets, *the prophets of his father, and the prophets of his mother* (prophets of Baal), and declaring that only the presence of

Jehoshaphat induced him to accede to the common request. He then called for a minstrel.

His Prophecy.—The inspiring, as well as the calming, power of music has been a common theme of poetry, and is often recognised in the Scriptures, as it is in the literature of all ages. Music formed part, as we have seen, of education in the prophetic schools, so that we need not wonder that Elisha should wait to be

Moved with the concord of sweet sounds.

And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of Jehovah came upon him, and he prophesied not only abundance of water, though neither rain nor wind should indicate its appearance, but also the deliverance of the Moabites into Israel's hand. And it came to pass in the morning, about the time of offering the oblation, that, behold, there came water by the way of Edom, and the country was filled with water.

Defeat of the Moabites.—Meantime the Moabites had gathered for a resolute resistance, and the opposing armies were facing one another, apparently on the southern frontier of Mesha's territory. The first sight presented to the Moabite sentries in the early morning was a great flood reflecting the crimson rays of the rising sun. It looked like blood, and a rumour ran through their camp that the three kings had fallen out, and that mutual destruction had followed. A disorderly rush to the Israelite camp showed the terrible mistake, and a hideous rout of Moab took place. There was nothing to stop a victorious march right into Mesha's land, and the conquerors proceeded from town to town, scattering stones over the cultivated fields on the way, stopping up the wells and cutting down the fruit trees. Such had been the ruthless command of Elisha.

Mesha sacrifices his Son, and the Allies retreat.—The combined forces thus reached Kir-Hareseth, now Kerak, the military capital, which was defended by formidable ramparts. The slingers had already commenced to throw their stones into the city. Mesha, who had retired into the fortress, realised that the attack was too strong for successful resistance, and endeavoured to cut his way through the camp of the Edomites, with seven hundred men; but the attempt failed. He then, prompted by despair, adopted a last resource, suggested by the religious customs of his nation. Smoke was one day noticed

rising above the wall of Kir-Hareseth, where a solemn holocaust was being offered to Chemosh, the victim being Mesha's eldest son, heir to the throne.

Help us from famine,
And plague, and strife !
What would you have of us ?
Human life.
Were it our nearest,
Were it our dearest,
We give you his life.

Such was the feeling of the Moabite king of that age, and the Israelites, although human immolation was always repugnant to their better mind, yet had the fullest faith in its efficacy. A panic seems to have sprung up in their midst when the action of Mesha became known, and, leaving their conquest incomplete, they retired.

The Moabite Stone.—It may have been after this sudden deliverance from his distress that Mesha erected his pillar as a thank-offering to his god Chemosh. The building operations which he enumerates were the legacy left him by the armies who had marched so victoriously through his land, devastating as they went, and then had so suddenly withdrawn.

JUDAH.

Death of Jehoshaphat.—When Jehoshaphat had fallen asleep with his fathers, and had been buried with them in the sepulchral caves of the city of David, the eldest of his seven sons, Jehoram (or Joram), succeeded him, so that two princes of the same name, brothers-in-law, sat on the two neighbouring thrones.

His Character.—Jehoshaphat was a good sovereign, brave, and politic ; and although the Book of Kings does not represent him as very successful, either in war or peace, the traditions preserved in Chronicles show him to have been fortunate in both. Even the purer conception of religion in a later age can find nothing amiss in him, except his continuance of the policy of tolerance of the worship on high places, which he inherited with his crown.

LXXXII. THE TWO JEHORAMS

2 KINGS v., vi. 8-20, vii.-viii. 16-24; 2 CHRON. xxi.

Lift not up your horn on high;
 Speak not with a stiff neck,
 For neither from the east, nor from the west,
 Nor yet from the south, cometh lifting up.
 But God is the judge,
 He putteth down one, and lifteth up another.

JUDAH—JEHORAM, OR JORAM.

About 870 B.C. *Reigned eight years.*

Influence of Queen Athaliah.—Jehoram (or Joram, *i.e.* exalted by Jehovah) ben Jehoshaphat, came to the throne of Judah five years after his namesake began to reign in Samaria. He had married Athaliah, a daughter of Ahab. She is sometimes called daughter (*bath*) of Omri, just as we shall find Jehu ben Jehoshaphat ben Nimshi also called ben Nimshi. It is very uncertain whether Jezebel of Tyre was her mother, though she adopted the cult of that queen, and was not unlike her in character and disposition, and was deeply imbued with the same ideas of religion and civilisation. We may probably attribute to her the massacre of the princes of the blood royal *and divers also of the princes of Israel*, by which her husband hoped to secure his position. And it was certainly the influence of this haughty and ambitious woman which caused Jehoram to abandon the policy of reform adopted by his father and grandfather, and *walk rather in the way of the kings of Israel, as did the house of Ahab*. In the eyes of the historian, it was only the fact that he belonged to the house of David, to which God had promised a lamp for ever, that prevented his complete destruction.

Revolt of Edom.—During this reign the Edomites threw off the yoke of Judah, and gave themselves an independent king. Jehoram undertook a campaign against them, but was unsuccessful. Being surrounded by the enemy, he only made his escape by cutting his way through them by night. Edom did not again lose the independence thus recovered.

Philistine Inroads.—At the same time Libnah, a town somewhere on the Philistine frontier, also revolted. This set the Philistines themselves in motion. They joined with some Arabian tribes in making inroads into the territory of Judah, and even succeeded in carrying off all the members of the royal family, except Jehoahaz, Joram's youngest son.

Death of Jehoram.—A painful and loathsome disease also troubled this king. The Chronicler relates that these misfortunes were predicted to him in a letter from Elijah, because of the high places which he had made in the mountains of Judah, and his idolatrous tendencies. After a calamitous reign of eight years, Jehoram succumbed to this horrible disease from which he suffered, and, according to the Book of Kings, was buried *with his fathers in the city of David*; but not, the Chronicler states, *in the sepulchres of the kings*. The last-named authority also tells us that he was neither honoured with the usual funeral display: *his people made no burning for him, like the burning of his fathers*—nor regretted by his subjects;—*he departed without being desired*. His son Ahaziah succeeded him.

ISRAEL.

JEHORAM'S REIGN—*continued*.

Elisha and Jehoram.—Chapters iv. to viii. of the Second Book of Kings are taken up chiefly with the doings of the great prophet Elisha. In them the king of Israel is referred to only by that title. His name is not given. But he was apparently Jehoram. The attitude which the prophet displays towards him, half friendly, half hostile, agrees with his treatment of him during the war with Moab. Besides, he speaks of him as *son of a murderer*, no doubt with allusion to the death of Naboth at the hands of Ahab.

War with Syria—Leprosy of Naaman.—We find, then, that the war with Syria lasted during all the twelve years of this reign. Israel's old opponent, Benhadad II., was not a man to forego the success he had won. His soldiers had made frequent raids on Israelite territory, and carried off captives to make them slaves. Even during the pauses of the conflict, Jehoram was always uneasy, and suspicious of fresh outrage. When Benhadad sent Naaman with a letter, which read, *Behold, I*

have sent Naaman my servant to thee, that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy, he felt that his foe was only seeking a cause of quarrel against him. This Naaman was one of Benhadad's greatest captains. But he was a leper. An Israelite maiden in his household spoke of Elisha, and of her certainty that he could heal her master.

And it was so, when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had rent his clothes, that he sent to the king, saying, Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel.

The Healing of Naaman.—Naaman, with his cavalcade, approached the prophet's dwelling, expecting him to come out and receive him,—as great men were wont to be received,—and work the miraculous cure then and there. The direction sent by a messenger, *to go wash in Jordan*, filled him with disappointment and rage. But he was a man of good sense, always ready to welcome a reasonable suggestion, even from his inferiors; and, acting on the advice of his servants, he obeyed Elisha, and was healed. Now, full of gratitude, he returned to the prophet, and exclaiming, *Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel*, he urged on his benefactor the acceptance of a present out of the treasure he had brought for that purpose. But Elisha said, *As Jehovah liveth, before whom I stand, I will receive none*. This refusal not only discloses a fine trait in the prophet's character, but indicates his perception of the spiritual truth that the gifts of God are not for sale. Theodoret justly compares our Lord's saying: "Freely ye have received, freely give."

Naaman allowed to attend the Worship of Rimmon.—Naaman then begged to be allowed to transport two mule burdens of Israelite soil to Damascus, in order henceforth not to offer sacrifice or burnt-offering to any Deity but Jehovah. He wished, that is, to worship Jehovah, but, in accordance with the ideas of the time, he thought that honour could be paid to the God of Israel only on an altar made of earth which was His own. And he asked one other indulgence. It was one of the duties of his office to attend his sovereign in his devotions in the house of the Syrian god Rimmon, and he begged that it might not be reckoned disloyal to Jehovah for him to go through the outward forms of the Syrian religion. This arrangement, which appears to us inconsistent with true

belief, and which would have been vehemently rejected by Elijah, was accepted without a scruple by the gentler and more tolerant Elisha, who said unto him, *Go in peace.*

The Fate of Gehazi.—The fate which overtook Gehazi, for his greedy clutch at the offer which his master had refused, brings into prominence the change which had come since the time of Saul, when the seer was one from whom an oracle must be sought by a present. Elisha's servant no doubt excused his own avarice by the recollection of that custom. The doom pronounced by his master, *The leprosy, therefore, of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever,* was a stern lesson. There is progress in spiritual things. *The time to receive money, and to receive garments, and olive-yards and vineyards, and sheep and oxen, and men-servants and maid-servants,* had gone by.

Benhadad's attempt to seize Elisha.—Elisha figures twice in the intermittent war that went on between Benhadad and the nameless king, whom we take to be Jehoram. The Syrian monarch found himself foiled in every attempt to take his adversary unawares, and was told that Elisha was the source of secret information to his master. Hearing that the prophet was in Dothan, he sent a detachment of horses and chariots to catch him. But at the prophet's prayer they were smitten with blindness, and brought into Samaria, only, however, to be dismissed after courteous treatment. The incident stayed for a time the Syrian incursions.

The Siege of Samaria—Famine.—But hostilities broke out again; and this time Benhadad, in full force, besieged Samaria. So complete was the investment that a dire famine reduced the town to starvation point. Plutarch mentions that during a famine amongst the Caducians an ass's head could hardly be got for sixty drachmas (£2, 10s.). In Samaria it now fetched 80 shekels (say £10). A handful of grains, resembling dove's dung, sold for 5 shekels (more than 10 shillings). And worse than this. As the king went his rounds on the wall, a woman cried to him, *Help, my lord, O king!* She had boiled her son, and shared the horrible meal with a neighbour, who now refused to keep her bargain of doing the same with her child.

Elisha prophesies Abundance.—The king, rending his clothes, and disclosing the fact that he wore sackcloth, for some reason that is not told, laid the blame of all this horror and

misery on Elisha, and vowed to have his head that very day. In his eagerness, he followed his messenger to see the sentence executed. But Elisha met him with the prediction, on the morrow, of such abundance of food, that a peck of fine flour or two pecks of barley would be sold for about two shillings. The captain on whose hand the king leaned, discrediting such a statement, said, *Behold, if the LORD should make windows in heaven, might this thing be? And he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof.*

Panic and Retreat of the Syrians.—And it was true. A sudden panic had broken out in the Syrian camp. *For Jehovah had made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, even the noise of a great host; and they said one to another, Lo, the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites, and the kings of the Egyptians, to come upon us.* If, indeed, Jehoram could have looked for help to the Hittites of the north, and to Egypt on the south, the position of Benhadad would have been serious. The very suspicion of such a combination against him caused him to beat a hasty retreat, and four lepers prowling about the Syrian camp found it completely deserted. Their news was at first disbelieved, but some scouts riding out confirmed the report, and Samaria was at once plentifully supplied from the provisions left behind. But the incredulous officer was crushed to death by the thronging multitudes at the gate of which he had charge, and so Elisha's prediction was entirely fulfilled.

LXXXIII. CONSPIRACY OF JEHU

2 KINGS viii. 25-x.; 2 CHRON. xxii. 1-9.

Open-eyed conspiracy
His time doth take.

ISRAEL.

JEHORAM'S REIGN—*continued.*

Elisha and Hazael.—But the end of this determined enemy of Israel, Benhadad II. was at hand. The narrative taken by the compiler of the Book of Kings from the records of Elisha

tells us of a visit paid by the prophet to the neighbourhood of Damascus when *Benhadad the king of Syria was sick*. Hazael, the man whom Elijah had been commissioned to anoint king, was despatched to inquire of Jehovah by him. Taking a great present with him, *even of every good thing of Damascus, forty camels' burden*, he went, and received the oracular response, *Go, say unto him, Thou shalt surely recover*. But added the prophet, *Howbeit Jehovah hath showed me that he shall surely die*. Elisha then fixed his eyes upon him so steadfastly that he blushed, perceiving no doubt that his secret thought was read, and the prophet burst into tears. *And Hazael said, Why weepeth my lord? And he answered, Because I know the evil that thou wilt do unto the children of Israel; their strong holds wilt thou set on fire, and their young men wilt thou slay with the sword, and wilt dash in pieces their little ones, and rip up their women with child*.

When the Syrian indignantly repudiated a prediction which looked in every way so unlikely, the prophet answered, *The LORD hath showed me that thou shalt be king over Syria*.

Murder of Benhadad.—Hazael returned to Damascus, and reporting to his master that Elisha said he would recover, he made the later prediction fulfil itself by smothering Benhadad with a wet cloth.

Renewed Attempt on Ramoth-Gilead.—Though the fright as to the Hittites and Egyptians which had suddenly saved Samaria was groundless, the usurper at Damascus had apprehensions of a very real kind. Shalmaneser II. of Assyria was one of the monarchs, of whom that kingdom produced so many, with an unresting appetite for conquest. Hazael seized the crown, knowing he was at once exposed to attack from this king who had so humbled Benhadad; and it may have been Jehoram's perception of this which induced him to make another attempt to wrest back Ramoth. With an Assyrian army threatening him on the north, the Syrian king might draw off some of the troops defending that place. Jehoram accordingly followed his father's policy, and claimed the help of Judah.

Jehoram wounded.—But an ill fate again attended the expedition. The two kings fought side by side under the walls of the besieged city, and Jehoram was so badly wounded that he was forced to retire to Jezreel, where Ahaziah, after visiting his own capital, repaired to see him. While greetings were passing

between the two kings an event was shaping itself in the Israelite camp at Ramoth, destined to have fatal consequences for them both, and for the whole house of Omri.

The Anointing of Jehu.—The officer left in command at Ramoth was Jehu ben Jehoshaphat ben Nimshi, who had served in the bodyguard of Ahab. He had since become famous as a charioteer; he was a Sthenelus among the Hebrews,

sciens
Pugnæ, sive opus est imperitare equis
Non auriga piger.

Jehu had been one of those whom Elijah had been commissioned to anoint. His commission passed on to Elisha, and that prophet now saw to its execution.

A young man, said by tradition to be the future prophet Jonah, son of the widow of Zarephath, arrived one day at the camp with a small flask in his hand. ¹ "His garments were girt round him in the manner of hasty travellers, and his appearance was wild and excited, as of a madman." *And when he came, behold, the captains of the host were sitting; and he said, I have an errand to thee, O captain. And Jehu said, Unto which of all of us? And he said, To thee, O captain.*

"The soldier and the youth withdrew into the house in front of which this scene had taken place. The officers remained outside in anxious expectation. Presently the door of the house opened, and the youth rushed out and disappeared as suddenly as he had appeared. Then Jehu himself came forth. He put off their eager inquiry for a moment." *Ye know the man, and what his talk was,* as much as to say, "You know, as well as I do, that this was a prophet. You can guess his mission here." Jehu was cautious, and would have liked the first note of revolt to have been struck by his officers. "But with an abruptness which gives a touch of military life to the whole transaction," they burst out, *It is false; tell us now.* Then he broke his reserve, and revealed the secret of the interview. "It had indeed been a messenger of Elisha, to fulfil the long-impending mission of Elijah." Once more there was a consecrated king of Israel. The oil of inauguration had been poured on the head of Jehu. He was to go forth the anointed of Jehovah, to exterminate the house of Ahab.

¹ Stanley, *Jewish Church*, Lect. xxxii. vol. ii. 331, 332.

He is accepted as King by the Troops.—"It was as if a spark had been set to a train long prepared. There was not a moment's hesitation." The officers tore off their military cloaks, and spread them on the stairs, and, as Jehu took his seat on this extempore throne, they blew the well-known blast of the ram's horn, which always accompanied the inauguration of a king of Israel, and shouted, *Jehu is king.*

So Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat, the son of Nimshi, conspired against Joram.

Jehu drives to Jezreel.—All the secrecy of conspiracy and all its haste were to be maintained. *And Jehu said, If this be your mind, then let none escape and go forth out of the city to go to tell it in Jezreel.* Only eight or nine leagues separated the royal residence from Ramoth, and no rumour of danger had reached Jehoram, who was kept at Jezreel by his wounds, and was now entertaining Ahaziah of Judah. It was the sentry on the watch-tower who first gave warning that some danger was at hand. Two horsemen, successively sent out for information, were detained by Jehu, according to his plan to secure that his arrival should be sudden. But soon the sentinel recognised the *driving of Jehu the son of Nimshi ; for he driveth furiously.*

Jehoram slain.—The two monarchs then went out in their chariots to meet Jehu, and *found him in the portion of Naboth the Jezreelite.* Jehoram's greeting of *peace* was received in a way that left no doubt of the purpose that had brought his captain from Ramoth, and just when he called out to his ally, *There is treachery, O Ahaziah,* Jehu drew his bow and shot his king through the heart. He fell in the chariot, and Jehu, with a grim reference to Elijah's prophecy delivered on that very spot in the hearing of himself and Bidkar, bade that officer throw the lifeless carcase on the ground, and leave it for the vultures and dogs.

Ahaziah slain.—The same consciousness that he was an agent in a work of providence turned Jehu's hand against Ahaziah, who, when the fatal arrow pierced his uncle, had fled across the plain towards Carmel. He, too, was killed, but the accounts of the manner of his death vary. He had reigned but one year.

Jezebel slain.—From pursuing Ahaziah Jehu returned immediately to Jezreel. The palace overhung the walls, and there was one watching for his approach whose haughty spirit no misfortune could bend. Jezebel, in a magnificent head-dress,

and with her eyes painted with antimony to give them a darker and prouder look, had placed herself at a lattice commanding the road, and challenged Jehu in words which were either a taunt or a defiance. He had partisans of his own about her, who at his bidding threw her down, and her blood sprinkled the walls and the chariot as he savagely drove over her mangled form on his way to a triumphal feast.

Fate of her Remains.—After the repast he said, *See now to this cursed woman, and bury her.* But they found nothing to bury save *the skull, and the feet, and the palms of her hands.* Naboth was avenged.

LXXXIV. END OF THE HOUSE OF OMRI

2 KINGS ix. 30, x.-xi. 1-3 ; 2 CHRON. xxii. 10-12.

The tyrannous and bloody act is done ;
The most arch deed of piteous massacre
That ever yet this land was guilty of.

JUDAH—ATHALIAH.

About 860 B.C. Reigned six years.

In whatever way Ahaziah met his death, whether, as in Kings, he was overtaken and killed in his flight from Jehu at Megiddo, or whether, as the Chronicler states, he succeeded in reaching Samaria, and was presently torn from his hiding-place and murdered in cold blood, his fate had terrible consequences. The queen-mother Athaliah saw that unless she took immediate steps to place herself actually at the head of affairs, her influence would slip from her. Her pride and ambition would not allow her to vacate her place readily, and the road to its maintenance undoubtedly lay over the bodies of her own grandchildren and relations. She had all the princes on whom she could lay her hand murdered, and then placed herself on the throne left without an occupant. It is the only case where a woman occupied the throne in Israel, at least till after the Captivity. There appears to have been no coronation or ceremony of enthronement. Judah only sullenly acquiesced in an arrangement alien to the national feeling, and forced upon

it. In spite of smothered opposition, however, this haughty woman was able to maintain her position for six years. This was about the middle of the ninth century.

ISRAEL—JEHU.

Reigned twenty-eight years.

Massacre of the House of Ahab. — But if there was murder at Jerusalem, there was massacre at Samaria. From Jezreel Jehu marched to the capital in blood. We seem to hear him say with Macbeth, *To be thus is nothing; but to be safely thus.* There were seventy princes of the blood royal at Samaria under the charge of the chief men of the city. Jehu secured their destruction by a bold challenge which threw the responsibility of the crime on these persons. They must fight for their master's house or obey the bloody order to kill all the seventy, and send their heads in baskets to Jezreel. The next morning the citizens saw two ghastly heaps at the gate of the city, and with a sanctimonious air the butcher came to them as they stood dismayed at the sight, saying, *Ye be righteous: behold, I conspired against my master, and slew him; but who smote all these? Know now, that there shall fall to the earth nothing of the word of the LORD, which the LORD spake concerning the house of Ahab; for Jehovah hath done that which He spake by His servant Elijah.* A terrific slaughter then took place in Jezreel itself, including *all that remained of the house of Ahab, all his great men, and all his familiar friends, and his priests, until he left him none remaining.* Usurpers may command success when policy can be made to go hand in hand with religion.

Massacre of Members of the Royal House of Judah.—Nor was even this the end. Perhaps Jehu thought that he had in blood

Stepped in so far, that should he wade no more,
Returning were as tedious as go o'er.

Halfway between Jezreel and Samaria was a well-known shearing-house. Here forty-two members of the royal house of Judah were killed. They may have been on their way to beg for the body of Ahaziah, which according to one account

had been buried in Samaria, and now their own bodies were apparently thrown into a cistern or well—a veritable well of Cawnpore.

Jehonadab and the Rechabites.—As yet Jehu had produced as a warrant for his bloodthirsty measures only the memory of prophetic words. He had not the sanction of any living member of the prophetic body. But now he comes across a figure which may well have reminded him of Elijah himself, one with a reputation which was inferior only to that of a prophet. This was Jehonadab ben Rechab, an Arab chief of the Kenite tribe, who had commanded his family to observe the rules of the ancient nomad life to dwell only in tents, to renounce agriculture, and to abstain from wine. The Rechabites chose for the scene of this style of existence one of the forest districts bordering on the Hauran, the country that produced Elijah. Their vows were akin to those of the Nazirites, and we find these closely associated with the prophets (Amos ii. 12).

Jehu and Jehonadab were already known to each other, and the interchange of a word was enough to show the usurper that he might here count on a kindred spirit. *Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart? And Jehonadab answered, It is. If it be, give me thine hand. And he gave him his hand; and he took him up with him into the chariot. And he said, Come with me, and see my zeal for Jehovah.*

Massacre of the Worshipers of Baal.—It was literally a fiery zeal. Baal's temple at Samaria still stood. Jehu openly professed to be an ardent worshipper of the Canaanite deity. *Ahab served Baal a little, but Jehu shall serve him much.* A festival on a most splendid scale was announced; the Temple was thronged; the sacrifices were ready; the sacred vestments were brought out; all the worshippers of Baal were there; all the servants of Jehovah, as unworthy of the sacred mysteries, were excluded.

Now Jehu had appointed him fourscore men without, and said, If any of the men whom I bring into your hands escape, he that letteth him go, his life shall be for the life of him. The executioners did their work well; none escaped. The temple was then polluted and defaced.

Traditional Horror of Jehu's Massacres.—Thus about 850 B.C. Jehu succeeded in establishing himself firmly on the northern throne, and the fact that Baal worship was rooted out

never to return, at least in such strength and vigour, was undoubtedly a gain, and must have been recognised as such by the prophetic party. Still the streams of blood that had flowed, and the frightful cruelties practised, must have deeply shocked the national conscience, which was now struggling to a higher conception of the character and nature of its God. A century after, the prophet Hosea felt that the blood shed by Jehu was still calling for vengeance. And though the usurper could plead the cause of religion in support of his ferocities, and perhaps really thought he was doing Jehovah service in shedding so much blood, yet he could not satisfy the religious demands even of his own time. *He took no heed to walk in the law of Jehovah the God of Israel with all his heart; he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam wherewith he made Israel to sin.* In fact, he was no reformer at all, but only an ambitious and unscrupulous man, who could use fanaticism for his own purpose.

'Tis a zealot's faith
That blasts the shrines of the false god, but builds
No temple to the True.

Syrian Inroads.—Retribution soon overtook him in the form of Syrian inroads. Hazael began immediately to take advantage of the disorders always attending a change of dynasty, to carry into Israelite territory that ruthless war foreseen by Elisha. Not only the debatable country adjoining the Aram of Damascus, but the whole of the Transjordanic part of Israel fell into his hands. "Damascus, indeed, had become what the Philistines had formerly been, the scourge of Israel, the aggressive enemy whom it was necessary to conquer or to cajole."¹

Tribute to Assyria.—Under these circumstances it is easy to believe that the Israelite king would throw himself into the arms of Assyria, the great power looming in the north-east. And in fact he paid tribute to Shalmaneser II., bars of gold and silver and various golden vessels, as we learn from that monarch's inscriptions. This was probably the price paid for a diversion to be made in Israel's favour. But Shalmaneser's campaign against Syria was only partially successful, so that Hazael could still harass Jehu. It was to a very dimin-

¹ Renan, *History of the People of Israel*, bk. iv. ch. xv.

ished sovereignty that, when Jehu slept with his fathers after a reign of twenty-eight years, his son Jehoahaz succeeded about 820 B.C.

LXXXV. REVOLUTION AT JERUSALEM

2 KINGS xi.-xii. 1-16 ; 2 CHRON. xxii. 10-xxiv. 22.

Indocile à ton joug, fatigué de ta loi,
Fidèle au sang d'Ahab qu'il a reçu de moi,
Conforme à son aïeul, à son père semblable,
On verra de David l'héritier détestable
Abolir tes honneurs, profaner ton autel,
Et venger Athalie, Ahab, et Jézabel.

JUDAH.

ATHALIAH'S REIGN—*continued.*

Establishment of Priests of Baal at Jerusalem.—It is unfortunate that our records are silent as to the government of Athaliah at Jerusalem. A history of the reign of the one woman who occupied the throne in ancient Israel would have been full of interest. All that we can gather from indirect notice is that the daughter of Ahab continued the traditions of her family in religious matters, since we find a temple of Baal in Jerusalem and a priesthood with one Mattan—the only priest of that religion whose name has been preserved—at its head. We can hardly help admiring her for thus following her convictions, a course which she must have known was dangerous to her position. Had she not made an outward profession of her religion she might have been allowed to sit on the throne till her death. It was from her open defiance of the priests of Jehovah that her fall came.

Preservation of Joash.—When *she arose and destroyed all the seed royal*, she thought that she had made all secure. But Jehosheba (or Jehoshabeath), sister to the late king, and, according to the Chronicler, wife of Jehoiada the priest, had prepared a romantic episode. *She took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him away from among the king's sons, even him and his nurse.* The hiding-place she first chose was apparently the storeroom of the mattresses in the palace, but

the prince was afterwards removed to a safer place,—one of the chambers in the precincts of the Temple.

Conspiracy of Jehoiada.—For six years the secret was kept, and the priests were preparing for their great stroke. Jehoiada won over the five officers of the royal guard, now, as in David's time, consisting partly of foreign mercenaries. These he bound to his cause by a solemn oath. The Chronicler adds that a body of armed Levites was also introduced into the Temple. They were encouraged by an ancient prediction, *Behold the king's son shall reign.*¹

It was apparently for a Sabbath day that the arrangements were made. On that day the Temple guard was relieved by the troops usually on duty at the palace. These latter were now divided into three detachments, posted, the first at the porch of the palace, the second and third at two of the Temple gates, whose names are variously given. The soldiers of the usual Temple guard, instead of going off duty, were to place themselves on the right and left of the young king inside the Temple, in order to protect his person, and to put to death anyone who came *within the ranks*. Thus nearly the whole of the available troops were massed about the palace and Temple.

Joash proclaimed King.—Jehovah then *brought out the king's son*, and when the little prince appeared on the royal platform he *put the crown upon him, and gave him the testimony; and they made him king, and anointed him; and they clapped their hands, and said, God save the king.* It is the first instance of an actual coronation. The *Testimony* or *Law* may be a copy of the Law such as it then existed.

The sound of the acclaim reached Athaliah in the palace. She at once came into the Temple; *and she looked, and, behold, the king stood by the pillar, as the manner was, and the captains and the trumpets by the king; and all the people of the land rejoiced, and blew with trumpets.*

Athaliah slain.—She saw in a moment that the fatal hour was come. She rent her royal robes, and cried, *Treason, Treason!* But she had no friends there. Jehoiada ordered the officers to drag her out from the sacred precincts. So strict was the reverence for the sanctuary that she passed all through the long array of armed men who *made way for her*;

¹ Stanley, *Jewish Church*, Lect. xxxv. vol. ii. 396.

and she went by way of the horses' entry to the king's house : and there was she slain.

Destruction of Baal Worship.—Then followed a renewal of the covenant *between Jehovah and the king and the people, that they should be Jehovah's people.* The Baal temple was destroyed in one of these bursts of iconoclasm which accompany reformations. Mattan was slain. Guards were placed over the Temple. And when order was restored the boy was brought to the palace and seated on the golden throne within the great gateway, *the throne of the kings.*

So all the people of the land rejoiced, and the city was quiet ; "and so ended the troubled scenes of the first Sabbath of which any detailed account is preserved."

JUDAH—JOASH, or JEHOASH.

Reigned forty years.

Jehoiada and the High Priesthood.—Joash was only seven when he was thus raised to the throne. During his minority Jehoiada virtually reigned. He may also, in a sense, be said to have created the office of *High Priest*, for this title, which had not been given to Aaron, or Eli, or Zadok, in whose time the distinctive name had been *the priest*, was given to him, and afterwards continued to his successors. The prophet Jeremiah (xxix. 26) seems almost to have regarded him as a second founder of the order of priesthood.

Joash and the Repair of the Sanctuary.—The first work of a powerful priestly body would naturally be the care of the Sanctuary. And Joash, brought up within the Temple walls, was naturally *minded to restore it.* The lapse of a century and a half must itself have made repairs necessary, even if Athaliah's sons had not wilfully injured the building.

The Income of the Priesthood.—Immense sums of money came into the priests' hands from two sources : first, the ransom of the firstborn who belonged to Jehovah ; secondly, offerings in fulfilment of vows. When anyone came to the temple to fulfil his religious duties, he addressed himself to some priest of his acquaintance, and they arranged the matter between them, the priest taking the money and giving no account of it. Joash decided that all such income should be devoted to the repair of the Temple, and gave orders accordingly ; but his

orders were silently neglected, Jehoiada apparently being as hostile to the financial reform as the other priests. Twenty-three years passed without anything being done.

Compromise as to the Priestly Revenues.—Then the king remonstrated and a new arrangement was made, by which in future the priests would receive for themselves only the fines and sin-offerings. All the rest was to be deposited in a chest having a lid with a hole in it, placed between the gate and the altar. *When they saw that there was much money in the chest, the king's scribe and the high priest came up, and, putting it in bags, handed it to trusted overseers of the work.*

Influence of Jehoiada—The High Places Tolerated.—The neglect of his orders by the priesthood had not produced any rupture between the king and that body. Jehoiada continued to exercise an influence over the court as long as he lived, and the piety of the monarch is attributed by the historian to this influence. *And Jehoash did what was right in the eyes of Jehovah all his days wherein Jehoiada the priest instructed him.* These instructions did not, however, as we are expressly told, reach as far as the necessity of removing the high places. Even the Temple priests as yet regarded worship at them as innocent. *Howbeit the high places were not taken away: the people still sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places.*

Death and Burial of Jehoiada.—But a change took place at Jehoiada's death. He passed to his rest *full of days; an hundred and thirty years old was he when he died.* His services as preserver of the royal dynasty and as restorer of the Temple worship were esteemed so highly that he received an honour allowed to no other subject in the Jewish monarchy. *They buried him in the city of David among the kings, because he had done good in Israel, and toward God and His house.*

Apostasy of Joash.—Then the aristocracy of Jerusalem, always licentious and idolatrous at heart, and embittered no doubt by the ascendancy lately asserted by the priestly order, presented themselves before Joash, and offered him the same obsequious homage that had been paid by the young nobles to Rehoboam. He, released now from obligations against which he may have secretly fretted, threw himself into their hands, and once more the degrading worship of the *Asherim* and the *idols* appeared in Judah.

Prophetic Denunciations—Murder of Zechariah.—Prophetic

warnings were raised against the apostasy. One of them came from a quarter which, from the king at least, ought to have commanded respect. *The spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, and he stood above the people, and said unto them, Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the LORD, that ye cannot prosper? Because ye have forsaken the LORD, He hath also forsaken you.* It was his death warrant. A plot was formed against him, and *at the commandment of the king* he was stoned in the court of the Temple. His last words were: *The LORD look upon it, and requite it.*

Retribution is often slow though sure. Here it was sure and quick.

Inroad of Hazael.—The Syrian king Hazael, not content with his ravages of the northern kingdom, made a sudden descent upon the south. He first attacked Gath, and having taken it, turned towards Jerusalem. The Chronicler seems to know of a battle in which *all the princes from among the people were destroyed, and the spoil of them sent to the king of Damascus.* From the Book of Kings we gather that Joash anticipated defeat by sending to Hazael as ransom all the royal treasure and that accumulated in the Temple.

Murder of Joash.—He was worn down by disease and unable to resist. How long he lingered we do not know. Two of his officers conspired against him and slew him in the fortress of Millo, ostensibly to avenge the blood of Zechariah, but the fact that they were the one of Ammonite the other of Moabite extraction, points to some foreign intrigue. *They buried him with his fathers in the city of David; and Amaziah his son reigned in his stead.*

LXXXVI. WARS AND RUMOURS OF WARS

2 KINGS xiii.

O war! thou son of hell,
Whom angry heavens do make their minister.

ISRAEL—JEHOAHAZ.

About 820 B.C. *Reigned seventeen years.*

Israel oppressed by Hazael.—Meantime the northern kingdom was in a deplorable condition. Jehoahaz succeeded his

father Jehu about 820 B.C., and succeeded to a lamentable heritage. For Hazael of Damascus made raid after raid into his country, and filled it to the letter with all the horrors predicted by Elisha. Nor did his death relieve the situation, for his successor, Benhadad III., continued his devastating work. Jehoahaz was so reduced at one time that he had to maintain the struggle with but fifty horsemen, ten chariots, and ten thousand footmen, and Israel was literally ground to dust, *for the king of Syria destroyed them, and made them like the dust in threshing*. It may be that the Damascenes were taking their revenge for the overtures that Jehu had made to their great enemy Assyria. At all events the war was prosecuted with cruelties which even at this period were regarded as extreme, and were long remembered. The prophet Amos proclaims the Divine vengeance on Aram of Damascus for having *threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron* (Amos i. 3).

Temporary Respite.—There was, however, one moment of relief. Jehoahaz turned in penitence to Jehovah, *and Jehovah hearkened unto him, and gave Israel a saviour*. Some think this refers to the sudden deliverance of Samaria already related, which ought to be placed in the reign of Jehoahaz ben Jehu, rather than in that of Joram ben Ahab. Or the reference may be to a diversion caused by the army of the Assyrian king Rammannirar, who reigned from 812 to 783, and has recorded a series of conquests including that of Damascus. This would naturally force the Syrians to leave Israel a while in peace, the only gleam of good fortune allowed to Jehoahaz in a reign of seventeen years. In religion this ill-fated monarch adhered to the cult of Jeroboam, and brought on himself the condemnation passed on the northern sovereigns generally. When he *slept with his fathers* he was buried in Samaria, and *Joash his son reigned in his stead*. This, according to 2 Kings xiii. 10, was while Joash was still reigning at Jerusalem, so that once more the sister kingdoms were under kings of the same name.

JOASH.

Reigned sixteen years.

Joash ben Jehoahaz was in religion no better than his predecessors. The sin of Jeroboam still clings to his court. But he

was successful in war. He took advantage of the humiliation of Damascus by Assyria to take the offensive and carry his arms into Syrian territory.

Joash and Elisha—Successes against Syria.—But this success was due more to the energy and patriotism of Elisha than to that of the king. Even on the bed of sickness, where he lay never to rise, the aged prophet is still the support and champion of his countrymen. Even there Joash calls him *the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof*, when he comes down to him to take his last farewell and *weep over him*. And even in the grip of death the prophet roused himself, and by one of those expressive symbolismes in which the seers delighted, directed him how to save his country. He bade the king take his bow, the favourite weapon of the chiefs of Israel, and shoot through the open lattice towards the east, towards Syria. And as the arrow flew he cried, *Jehovah's arrow of victory, even the arrow of victory over Syria; for thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek, till thou have consumed them*. Then, still continuing the symbolic action, he bade Joash smite with the arrows on the ground; *and he smote thrice and stayed*. The wrath of the man of God was aroused by this seeming want of energy. Not thrice, but five or six times would he have smitten, who hoped to inflict lasting defeat on his foes. But still the tide had turned, and, according to the augury, Joash did smite Syria three times, and recovered the cities that had been taken.

Death of Elisha.—And now Elisha died. The part which he took in the political life of his time has been told. We have seen him the counsellor and the confidant of kings, a source of courage and energy to his countrymen, that nothing could daunt and nothing tire. But it is on its social side that the long career of this prophet appeals to us most strongly and interests us most deeply.

Miracles of Elisha.—A younger generation loved to recount the wonders he had wrought. In due course a collection of stories about him and his predecessor seems to have taken written form, and from this copious extracts have been preserved. Most of the miracles recorded of him were wrought as neighbourly acts of kindness or at the call of grateful friendship. All, with one exception, are deeds of mercy. They remind us less of Elijah, his predecessor, than of the Christ.

The Widow's Cruse.—The widow of one of the sons of the prophets was hard pressed by her creditors, and cried to Elisha for help. He asked her what she had in the house, and was answered, Only a pot of oil. From this one jar were filled all that could be borrowed from her neighbours, and the debt was paid.

The Raising of the Shunemite's Son.—The prophet was in the habit of visiting a lady at Shunem. A room in her house was always ready for him, and its very furniture is described for us : a bed, a table, a stool, and a candlestick. He repaid his welcome by the grateful promise that his hostess, who was childless, should bear a son. The child was born, and grew up, till one day in the harvest-field it was seized with sunstroke and died. *And he said unto his father, My head, my head ! And he said unto his servant, Carry him to his mother. And when he had taken him, and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and then died.* To the surprise of her husband, who reminded her that it was *neither new moon nor Sabbath*, she determined to go to the prophet. *And she said, It shall be well.* Every little detail of the touching narrative that follows shows how close a bond had been woven between this family and Elisha. To Gehazi, sent to ask the reason of her coming, she would answer only, *It is well.* But when she came to the man of God upon the hill, *she caught hold of his feet.* The servant would have thrust her away, but Elisha stayed him, troubled in his own soul that no intimation had come to himself of the trouble he saw in her. Her only words were, *Did I desire a son of thee, my Lord ? Did I not say, Do not deceive me.* The prophet understood, and her son was restored to life.

The Poisoned Broth.—At Gilgal we see him still on the closest terms with the sons of the prophets. It was a time of scarcity, and he was glad to be able to provide them with broth. But by accident a poisonous herb had been used in making it. *And it came to pass, as they were eating the pottage, that they cried out, and said, O man of God, there is death in the pot.* By casting in meal the danger was removed.

And when a man from Baal-shalisha brought his first fruits to Elisha, he devoted them to the relief of all the people ; and though they were a hundred in number, *they did eat and left thereof.*

The Floating of the Iron Axe.—In all their enterprises the prophetic scholars went to Elisha for direction and assistance.

And on one occasion he accompanied a party to make a new settlement in the Jordan valley. While felling wood for their huts a man dropped an axe-head into the stream, and he cried, *Alas, my master, for it was borrowed. And he cut down a stick, and cast it in thither; and made the iron to swim.*

Elijah and Elisha Compared.¹—It is in these social relations that Elisha contrasts so remarkably with his predecessor. The succession was close and immediate. The mantle had fallen, the double portion of spirit had been bequeathed. But it was a succession not of likeness but of contrast. The fire of love has come instead of the fire of destruction, gentleness has taken the place of violence, tolerance of exclusive zeal, the tenderness of civilised life for the wild ardour of the child of the desert. And this contrast extends to the grave. For Elisha was not borne away in fire like Elijah, but was buried with a splendid funeral. A sumptuous tomb was shown in after ages as his in the royal city of Samaria. And at it alone, of all the graves of Old Testament saints, wonders were wrought which seemed to continue after death the grace and beneficence of his long and gentle life. Moabite raids were frequent at that time, and as they were burying a man the funeral party had to flee. In their haste they cast the body *into the sepulchre of Elisha; and as soon as the man touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood upon his feet.*

LXXXVII. NEW BREACH BETWEEN THE TWO KINGDOMS

2 KINGS xiv. ; 2 CHRON. xxv.

This might have been prevented and made whole
With very easy arguments of love,
Which now the manage of two kingdoms must
With fearful bloody issue arbitrate.

JUDAH—AMAZIAH.

About 810 B.C. Reigned twenty-nine years.

The High Places still tolerated.—Joash of Judah was succeeded by his son Amaziah. This was about ten years

¹ Stanley, *Jewish Church*, Lect. xxxi. vol. ii. 324, 327.

before the close of the ninth century. *He was twenty and five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned twenty and nine years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Jehoaddan of Jerusalem.* In religion he followed his father, taking no steps to restrict sacrifices and worship to the Temple, but allowing the high places to remain.

Execution of the Murderers of Joash.—His first act was to bring his father's murderers to justice, and it is expressly noted as an advance in gentler manners that he did not keep to the terrible rigour of the old blood-feud, by destroying all the family of the assassins, but obeyed a law which is in the Book of Deuteronomy. *The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers; every man shall be put to death for his own sin* (Deut. xxiv. 16).

Successful War with Edom.—A campaign against Edom then occupied him. He made a preliminary census to ascertain the number of his fighting men, and, according to the Chronicler, thinking these insufficient for his object, *hired a hundred thousand mighty men of valour out of Israel for a hundred talents of silver.* But a prophet denounced this policy; whether because the mercenary system appeared iniquitous, or because these mercenaries were Israelites, does not appear. They were in any case sent back, and they returned home in fierce anger at the slight. The expedition against Edom, carried on in the Valley of Salt, south of the Dead Sea, was successful. Sela or Petra, the capital, was taken, and the name Joktheel was given it, and remained to the historian's day.

JUDAH AND ISRAEL.

War with Israel declared.—Elated by this success, and, it may be, exasperated by some lawless depredations committed on their way home by the disbanded Israelite mercenaries, Amaziah determined to break the friendly relations so long maintained with the northern kingdom, and sent a challenge to Joash of Samaria,—*Let us look one another in the face.*

Defeat of Amaziah.—The reply of Joash was contemptuous, and presented in the form of a fable. *The thistle that was in Lebanon sent to the cedar that was in Lebanon, saying, Give thy daughter to my son to wife; and there passed by a wild beast*

that was in Lebanon, and trod down the thistle. And indeed the vanity bred of his Edomite victory was to cost Amaziah dear, for Joash took the initiative, met the Judahites at Bethshemesh, and completely routed them, taking their king prisoner. He then proceeded to Jerusalem itself without further opposition, and left a significant mark of his superiority, breaking down four hundred cubits length of the wall on the side looking towards his realm, and thus opening up his adversary's capital permanently to his march. Then he returned to Samaria, carrying off the sacred vessels of the temple and the royal treasures, as well as hostages for Amaziah's good behaviour. The Chronicler attributes these misfortunes, not to Amaziah's foolish conceit, but to a lapse into idolatry. *From Edom he had brought the gods of the children of Seir, and set them up to be his gods, and bowed down himself before them, and burned incense unto them.*

JUDAH.

Death of Amaziah. — Amaziah survived his conqueror fifteen years, but apparently with only the semblance of regal power, and then fell like his father by the hands of conspirators, who tracked him to Lachish, whither he had fled, and slew him there. He was, however, brought back to Jerusalem, and honoured with the usual burial, being laid with his fathers in the city of David.

ISRAEL—JEROBOAM II.

About 790 B.C. Reigned forty-one years.

Literature of his Reign—His Conquests.—Joash of Israel lived on into the eighth century. He was buried in Samaria, and was succeeded by his son Jeroboam II. about 790 B.C. About this the greatest of Samaria's kings, the history is the briefest. Indeed we should know next to nothing of what must have been a remarkable as well as a long reign, were it not for the prophetic literature which now began to make its appearance. All that the historian has to tell us is, as to religion that Jeroboam was an imitator of his namesake, and as to policy that he was warlike, and *restored the border of Israel, from the entering in of Hamath unto the sea of the*

Arabah. But this, which means not only recovery of all that had belonged to the northern kingdom, but also the subjugation of new territory and power, where once the suzerainty of Judah had been recognised, implies long and severe fighting, of which the historian knows no details.

The Prophet Jonah.—But he tells us that the conquests were made *according to the word of Jehovah the God of Israel, which He spake by the hand of His servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet which was of Gath-hepher*. The traditions identifying this prophet with the child of the widow of Zarephath, the attendant of Elijah on his flight, and the youth who anointed Jehu, have already been noticed. He is also thought to be the same whose story is related in the Book of Jonah. And a prophetic poem which is preserved in Isaiah may originally have come from his pen (Isa. xv., xvi.).¹

Destruction of the Moabite Host.—From it we conclude that to regain the territory north of the Arnon, which had been seized, the Moabites poured into it a host of Arab tribes, who swept southwards over the rich land of Moab itself, and reduced it to entire submission. All the horrors of the night when Moab fell are depicted there. We seem to see also that in its despair Moab turned to Judah for help, but in vain.

Luxury at Samaria.—In the reign of a monarch so successful abroad we should expect developments at home. Becoming rich and powerful, the state would give evidence of its prosperity in its social condition. This we gather was the case from the pictures of life at Samaria, drawn a half-century later by the prophet Amos. We see luxury once more prevalent as in Ahab's time. The two royal residences, one for summer, the other for winter, the gorgeous ivory decorations, the enervating voluptuous life of the nobles, are all graphically described (Amos iii., iv.). The means for all the expense implied in the possession of splendid buildings and rich furniture must have been acquired by Jeroboam's successes, even if the refinements described by the prophet belong to the succeeding period. But we wish we had the Book of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel, in which were written the acts of Jeroboam before he *slept with his fathers, even with the kings of Israel: and Zechariah his son reigned in his stead*.

¹ Stanley, *Jewish Church*, Lect. XXXIII. vol. ii. 351.

JUDAH—AZARIAH, OR UZZIAH.

About 780 B.C. Reigned fifty-two years.

Jeroboam had reigned at Samaria twenty-seven years according to the Book of Kings, according to the Chronicler only fifteen years, when Azariah or Uzziah succeeded his father Amaziah at Jerusalem. *Sixteen years old was he when he began to reign, and his mother's name was Jecoliah of Jerusalem.*

The double name may be accounted for by the similarity of meaning in the two forms, "strength" or "help of Jehovah." An Assyrian inscription shows that Azariah, the usual name in the Book of Kings, was that by which this monarch was known abroad.

Successes of Azariah.—Even from the meagre account in the Book of Kings we might gather that the reign was successful as well as long, for it mentions the building of Elath and its restoration to Judah. From the Chronicler we learn that this was only one of many successes over the troublesome neighbours of Judah. The Ammonites paid Azariah tribute. *And God helped him against the Philistines, and against the Arabians that dwelt in Gur-baal, and the Meunim.* These mysterious people have had light cast upon them by Oriental archæology, confirming the view of scholars who saw in them the Minæans of Southern Arabia, whose power extended at one time as far north as Gaza.¹ Uzziah's name, we are told, *spread abroad even to the entering in of Egypt.*

Relations with Assyria.—It was doubtless after the removal of the strong hand of Jeroboam II. that these conquests were made by Judah. Assyrian records speak of the subjugation by Tiglath-pileser III. of certain Syrian towns, which had revolted to "Azriyahu the Judæan." These were apparently towns that during Jeroboam's life had depended on him for help against the power of Assyria, and after his death had turned for aid to Judah.

The Chronicler dwells on the organisation of the vast *trained army* which made these successes possible, and on the building operations conducted by this monarch, both for military and peaceful purposes. And he tells us that a history of the reign was written by Isaiah.

¹ Sayce, *The Higher Criticism and the Monuments*, p. 468.

His Religious Character.—Azariah is commended in the Book of Kings as doing *that which was right in the eyes of the Lord*, though he did not remove the high places. The Chronicler has the same commendation, adding, *And he set himself to seek God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God; and as long as he sought Jehovah, God made him to prosper.*

Leprosy of Azariah—Conflict with the Priesthood.—The same writer at a later point supplements the narrative in Kings. Both narratives record the leprosy which afflicted the monarch, but in Chronicles it is described as a judgment which punished the assumption on his part of the priestly function of burning incense upon the altar. Previous kings had acted as priests with impunity. The conflict which is described as taking place between Azariah the king and Azariah the chief priest marks a great change in religious sentiment.

Death and Burial.—Though secluded from society *in a several house* during three years of sickness, Azariah was at his death *buried with his fathers in the city of David.*

LXXXVIII. WRITTEN PROPHECY—PROPHETS OF THE NORTH

New shape and voice the immaterial thought
 Takes from the invented speaking page sublime,
 The ark which mind has for its refuge wrought,
 Its floating archive down the floods of time.

The further the history proceeds the more meagre becomes the information in the Book of Kings. It is only in exceptional instances that we get any detailed account. But just when the historian begins to fail us about the middle of the eighth century, a source of fresh information, as already observed, is opened up in the writings of the prophets.

Hitherto prophets had delivered their messages chiefly to individuals and by word of mouth. What they had written down had apparently been annals of their times. Elijah, indeed, is reported by the Chronicler to have sent a writing to Joram of Judah denouncing his apostasy from Jehovah, and foretelling his sickness. But onwards from this time the *Nebiim* both

assume a new character and adopt a new method. They address the public; they exhort, warn, threaten the people; they appeal to the general conscience. And they do not content themselves with oratory. They write down what they have to deliver, and present it in the form of books or fly-sheets. This was in consequence of the changed times, for Israel was entering on a period of literary activity.

This change is of inestimable value for our knowledge of the history from this time onward. "The dry skeleton of the narrative in Kings is quickened into life by the fresh air of natural feeling which breathes from these utterances. It gets flesh and blood and all the freshness of natural colour. The prophets are moved to the very depths of their nature by what goes on around them. They reflect all the life of their nation. Its troubles send a throb through their heart. Its cares eat into their soul. Its sins burn in their conscience. And what thus inwardly moves them and lays hold of them, finds natural expression in spontaneous and unadorned words."¹ These utterances were often forecasts of the future; but *prediction*, in its ordinary sense, is by no means synonymous with prophecy, which was engaged rather with broad moral issues than with particular events. The prophets stood out, of course, above the general level of the religious thought of their time. They saw what the ordinary man did not see, that there existed in fact two religions side by side, each professing to be the religion of Jehovah; the one reflecting the pure ideal of Moses, and Samuel, and Elijah, the other debased by the Canaanite elements, which had gradually been absorbed. In the latter there was an assimilation of the worship of Jehovah to the native worship, and, consequently, an obscuration of the lofty ethical conception of the God of Israel, who had sunk down nearly to the level of a nature-god, whose office was to give the people *their bread and water, their wool and flax* (Hos. ii. 5). The conception which masses of the people had of Jehovah was one which He could not recognise as the conception of Himself. Hence He said, *Seek Me, and ye shall live*; but seek not Bethel nor enter into Gilgal, *and pass not into Beersheba* (Amos v. 5). In those ancient sanctuaries, while professedly worshipping their nation's God, they were in reality rendering service proper to Baal.

¹ Kittel, *History of the Hebrews*, bk. iii. ch. iv.

The Writings of Amos.—The first of this new school for whom a date can be found with anything like precision is Amos. He appeared in the northern kingdom, during the reign of Jeroboam II., to denounce the luxury that was eating into society, and the crimes of the court. But he was not of Ephraim by birth. He came from Tekoa in Southern Judah, the ruins of which still survive on a commanding hill six miles south of Bethlehem.¹ Its old name still clings to the place. The men of Tekoa looked out on a desolate and haggard world. "This is the wilderness of pasture-land of Tekoa, across which by night the wild beasts howl, and by day the blackened sites of deserted camps, with the loose cairns that mark the graves of nomads, reveal a human life almost as vagabond and homeless as that of the beasts. Upon this unmitigated wilderness, where life is reduced to poverty and danger, Amos heard the voice of God calling him to be a prophet, and gathered those symbols and figures in which his prophet's message still teaches us with so fresh and so austere an air."

When challenged by Amaziah, the priest at Bethel, on his right to preach in Ephraim, he replied—

I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son (that is, he had not been trained in the prophetic school); but I was a herdsman, and a dresser of sycomore trees, and Jehovah took me from following the flock, and Jehovah said unto me, Go, prophesy unto My people Israel.

His Description of Samaria.—The picture he draws of the condition of society is a sad one. Barbarity and violence are unchecked, and the poor can get no redress from justice. Insolence, pride, wanton luxury, and the most shameless immorality seem to this son of the desert to prevail wherever there is a city and a settled life. It may not, indeed, be a complete picture which he draws of the civilisation of Samaria. All the merchants may not have been dishonest, nor all the women like fat *kine of Bashan*, but his vision of the doom hanging over a society so profligate and so idolatrous was true then and is ever true.

The Prophecies of Hosea.—The great part of the prophecies of Hosea, and probably the composition of his book generally, belong to the later half of the eighth century. The son of Beeri did not, like Amos, come from Judah. He was of

¹ G. A. Smith, *The Book of the Twelve Prophets*, pp. 75, 233.

Ephraim. It was a personal experience that turned him into a prophet. His wife, whom he tenderly loved, was unfaithful to him. But still he loved her. So does Jehovah still love His unfaithful Israel. That is the burden of this prophet, the glorious message he has to deliver. Hosea is the prophet of Divine love. It is love, not judgment, which will win the wanton back. The prophet does not shrink from setting forth the sins of Israel in all their offensiveness. If she suffers, it is because she has forsaken the true God. But *He* has not forsaken *her*. His love-gifts to his people are too many and too manifest to allow of such a thought. The early rain and latter rain; the first flush of the young corn, the scent of the vine blossom, the first ripe fruit of the fig-tree; the bursting of the lily, the beauty of the full olive in sunshine and breeze; the mists and heavy dew of a summer morning on the hills, the night air laden with the scent of Lebanon, Hosea's imagination lights up all these with the thought that they tell of Heaven's love. Or it is the dearer human sights in valley and field on which his fancy lingers: the smoke from the chimney, the chaff from the threshing floor, the doves startled and flying to their towers, the fowler and his net, the breaking up of the fallow ground, the harrowing of the clods, the reapers, the heifer treading out the corn, or the draught oxen surmounting the steep road to have the yoke removed and their provender served; through all these, like nothing save the parables of Jesus, spoken amid the same scenes, we hear the Divine voice calling Israel, loved when a child and still loved, we see the Divine pity *drawing with the cords of a man*.

But it is only after a punishment has fallen that love will triumph. Hosea sees that Israel's guilt, idolatry, and open immorality, in which not only the accredited leaders of the nation, but also priests and prophets have a share, must lead to a doom. Israel must fall together with the monarchy. But when that has happened, the judgment will have purified it, and God will have pity.

Germ of the Messianic Idea.—And over Judah, too, this prophet of the north casts his glance. He is very hopeful for the fallen dwellings of David. Judah is indeed far from free of sin; still it is at least better than Israel, and the future belongs to it and to its royal house. Sometime those belonging to the northern kingdom may turn to Judah as their home and

recognise David as the rightful king. This is the dawn of the Messianic Hope, a glorious restoration under an ideal monarch, of whom David begins now to be the type.

We find both in Amos and Hosea what is a predominant idea in prophecy, the superiority of righteousness over ritual observances. It is from Hosea that the noble word comes, *I will have mercy and not sacrifice* (Hos. vi. 6 ; Matt. ix. 13).

Hosea and the Kingdom of Assyria.—In his forebodings of coming evil, Amos confines himself to natural calamities, earthquakes, locusts, drought, famine, and the plague. If he foresees political catastrophe, his notice is so veiled that we cannot with certainty say that the power of Assyria was in his thought. Joel, too, who according to some critics belongs to a period only a little later, has no knowledge of a judgment except as expressed through nature. But with Hosea comes more than a presentiment of what the East was preparing. A lurid flash lightens up the sky, and shows to the startled glance of Israel that she is walking close to a yawning abyss. The advent of this mighty foe to work the decrees of Jehovah against a sinful people will, as we shall see, introduce an altogether new element into prophecy. It will be necessary to watch the attitude of the men of God to Assyria, not only in order to understand their own utterances, but also to comprehend the history subsequent to the time at which we now are.



LXXXIX. USURPATION AND ANARCHY

2 KINGS xv. 8-32.

Now for the bare-pick'd bone of majesty
Doth dogged war bristle his angry crest,
And snarlth in the gentle eyes of peace.

ISRAEL—ZECHARIAH.

About 750 B.C. Reigned six months.

In the northern kingdom, with the death of Jeroboam II. about 750 B.C., three years after the colony from Alba Longa is said to have founded Rome, the star of the dynasty of Jehu sank, and with it that of the kingdom. Usurpers began to

follow one another in quick succession, the sword of the one removing the other, until, finally, the last one, and with him the kingdom, became the prey of a mightier power.

Jeroboam was in fact the last of the few kings of Ephraim who died a natural death. His son, Zechariah, who succeeded him, only reigned six months. Shallum ben Jabesh put himself at the head of a conspiracy against him and slew him, thus fulfilling Jehovah's word to Jehu: *Thy sons to the fourth generation shall sit upon the throne of Israel.*

SHALLUM.

Reigned one month.

The usurper only kept possession of the throne one month, It was indeed only in Samaria and its neighbourhood that he was able to maintain for that brief period a semblance of rule. The old capital, Tirzah, only a few miles to the north, was in the possession of Menahem ben Gadi, who was possibly commanding a garrison there. He marched to Samaria, overcame Shallum, and put him to death, and then, fierce and unscrupulous soldier that he was, ravaged the country between Tirzah and Tiphseh (a place in the vicinity, unknown except by name), because it did not immediately submit to him, sparing neither age nor sex.

MENAHM.

Reigned ten years.

Growth of Anarchy.—These severe measures secured the throne to Menahem for ten years. But it was over a distracted kingdom. The flame of civil war once lighted does not easily go out. Hosea has left a picture of the anarchy of the time. *They are all hot as an oven, and devour their judges: all their kings are fallen; there is none among them that calleth unto me* (Hos. vii. 7). And the penetrating eye of a young prophet in Judah was noting the troubles of the sister kingdom. Isaiah writes of the two leading tribes of the north: *They shall eat every man the flesh of his own arm: Manasseh, Ephraim; and Ephraim, Manasseh* (Isa. ix. 20, 21).

Israel becomes Tributary to Assyria.—Under such circumstances it was that Assyria first set foot on the native soil of Israel. Nineveh and Babylon were then united under one

monarch, himself a usurper, but with ideas of power and conquest worthy of the great prince who, four centuries earlier, bore the name he assumed. This was Pul (or Pulu), as the Hebrews and Babylonians persisted in calling him, but who, on his boastful tablets, names himself, Tukulti-abal-i-sarra, or Tiglath - pileser.¹ He took tribute, he says, of Rezin of Damascus and Menahem of Samaria. The biblical account is: *There came against the land Pul, the king of Assyria; and Menahem gave Pul a thousand talents of silver* (about £340,000), *that his hand might be with him to confirm the kingdom in his hand. So the king of Assyria turned back, and stayed not there in the land.* Thus Menahem bought from Assyria security for his throne. It was only putting off the evil day, as Hosea saw. *Then went Ephraim to the Assyrian, and sent to king Jareb (i.e. Quarrelsome, a hint that the conqueror who knew his strength would easily find a pretext for a fresh attack), but he is not able to heal you, neither shall he cure you of your wound* (Hos. v. 13). Once mixed up with the politics of the world, Israel's doom was sealed. *Ephraim, he mixeth himself among the peoples; Ephraim is a cake not turned* (vii. 8), therefore undoubtedly burnt. Possibly glances had also been turned southwards to Egypt, for the same prophet says, *Ephraim is like a silly dove without understanding: they call unto Eyypt, they go to Assyria* (vii. 11).

Raising of the Tribute.—Menahem raised the amount of the tribute by exacting fifty shekels from each landowner, and as a talent of silver contained three thousand shekels, we learn that in the northern kingdom at this time there were about sixty thousand families of substance.

Religion of Menahem—His Death.—In religion Menahem conformed to the semi-idolatrous cult introduced by Jeroboam. When he *slept with his fathers, Pekahiah his son reigned in his stead.* This was about 740 B.C.

PEKAHIAH.

Reigned two years.

But the day of military conspiracy was not over. Pekahiah only reigned two years. One day Pekah ben Remaliah, captain of the royal chariots, or, as we should say, chief cavalry officer,

¹ Schrader, *Cuneiform Inscriptions and the Old Testament*, vol. i.

burst into the palace with fifty Gileadites at his heels, and slew the king with his two attendants, Argob and Arieh, whose names, "the stony" and "the lion," suggest that they defended their master to the last.

PEKAH.

Reigned twenty years.

It is probable that the usurper had the national sentiment with him. The disgraceful pact made by Menahem with Assyria was not likely to be popular. And there must have been many able to see that the only hope of resisting a great world-power determined on conquest, lay in a close combination of all the Syrian states. At all events this was the policy adopted by Pekah. We know from Tiglath-pileser's own records that from 737 to 735 B.C. he was occupied in the far East. This was the opportunity for the Syrian princes.

His Confederacy against Assyria.—Pekah made successful overtures to Rezin of Damascus, an adventurer like himself, and the allies set themselves to persuade or force the Phœnician cities, Judah, Philistia, Moab, and Edom, and even the Arabians, to join the confederacy. The attempt succeeded with Tyre and Sidon, and with an Arabian queen, Shamsi. And for Judah it had momentous consequences.



XC. THE SYRO-EPHRAIMITISH WAR

2 KINGS xv. 32-xvi. ; 2 CHRON. xxvii., xxviii. ; ISA. vii.-x. 5, xvii. 1-12.

Cry havoc! and let slip the dogs of war.

JUDAH—JOTHAM.

About 740 B.C. Reigned sixteen years, of which nearly all were probably years of regency, his father being still alive.

Azariah (Uzziah) was succeeded by his son Jotham. He had acted as regent during his father's leprosy, a period of many years. *He was over the household, and judged the people of the land.*

His wise and energetic Rule.—The Chronicler attributes to him many public works, a new gate in the Temple court, and the strengthening of the fortifications of Jerusalem at a spot on the south, called *Ophel* (or “the Mound”), immediately below the royal palace, on the south-east of the city. Cities in the hill country of Judah were also built by him, and, in the exposed forest districts, castles and towers. The Ammonites, who sought to regain their independence, were speedily reduced, and obliged to pay a large annual tribute. Other warlike enterprises are alluded to by the Chronicler, for Jotham was evidently a brave and successful ruler, and seems to have been considered king when only regent. How long he was sole monarch we do not really know. The chronological difficulties are best met by supposing that he died very soon after his father.

The Political Situation at his Death.—The schemes maturing in the north cast their shadow over his land before his death. He seems to have lived just long enough to hear the muttering of the storm. *In those days Jehovah began to send against Judah, Rezin, the king of Syria, and Pekah, the son of Remaliah. And Jotham slept with his fathers.* When he thus left the crown to his son Ahaz, the situation was such as to require a powerful hand on the helm, and a wise and far-seeing eye in the council chamber. The first Judah did not, unfortunately, find in her new sovereign, but the second she did find in the prophet Isaiah ben Amoz.

The Prophet Isaiah.—It is tantalising that we know hardly anything of the private life of this remarkable man, one of the strongest personalities even the Hebrew race ever produced. He was probably of a noble Judahite stock. He had received the prophetic call when a young man, in Uzziah’s reign. The literary perfection of his writings, in which Semitic speech reaches its highest point of excellence, implies a good education. There is mention of a wife and of two sons, whose names, Shear-jashub, “remnant shall return” (Isa. vii. 3), and Maher-shalal-hash-baz, “prompt to spoil, plunder quickly” (Isa. viii. 1), had a significance at the time. He survived, but by how many years we cannot say, the great crisis of Hezekiah’s reign, about 700 B.C., and according to tradition found a martyr’s death in the reign of Manasseh.

But as a public character Isaiah stands out before us with all

the certainty and distinctness that could be desired. Though holding no official title or function, he was for nearly fifty years the inspired soul, the acting conscience of Israel. He was by far the most important factor in the life at Jerusalem from Uzziah to Hezekiah. Every event that happened was either controlled by him or watched with eager hope or indignant disapprobation, according as it made for righteousness and piety, or tended to social and political harm. He was indeed *par excellence* the prophet, the man of God, in Israel. Like Moses and Elijah, he belongs to the list of religious heroes of his nation, in whom its mission to the nations of the world found its most complete expression, and so his figure stands out as a landmark visible far and wide in Hebrew history.

AHAZ.

Reigned sixteen years.

Ahaz succeeded at twenty without any experience of life, and also without the moral force and stability which come from a firm faith in God. *I will give children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them. . . . As for My people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them* (Isa. iii. 4). This was the prophetic greeting of his accession.

His Idolatries—Human Sacrifice.—The historian says, *He did not that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah his God, like David his father; but he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel.* He even exceeded them in the grossness of his idolatries: not only did he make *molten images for the Baalim*, but *he burnt his children in the fire, according to the abominations of the heathen.* Human sacrifice was repugnant to the best Hebrew feeling.

Attacked by Israel and Syria.—The accession of a young prince was favourable to a renewal of the attempt of Pekah and Rezin to force Judah into alliance against Assyria. Accordingly they marched to Jerusalem, and laid siege to it, as Joash had done, but not with like success, for they could not overcome Ahaz. But they thoroughly frightened him. *His heart was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the forest are moved with the wind* (Isa. vii. 2).

He resolves to seek Aid from Syria—Warnings of Isaiah.—In his fear an expedient occurred to him which, in spite of all Isaiah's

resistance, he ultimately adopted. Like Menahem, he would try to buy the protection of Assyria against the nearest foes. Chapter vii. of Isaiah's prophecy shows us the attitude of the seer towards this project. It is the voice of the practical statesman warning the nation that their safety lay not in external alliances, but in their own resources, strengthened and sustained by faith in God. The contemptuous words in which he speaks of Rezin and Pekah shows that they constituted in his eyes no real cause for alarm, whereas reliance on Assyria would inevitably bring on a retribution unforeseen except by prophetic eyes—the land would be turned into an arena for the fight of the two great world-powers, Egypt and Assyria, and would be swept so bare that the simplest pastoral produce, curdled milk and honey, would be the sole subsistence for the survivors.

Ahaz sends Presents to Tiglath-pileser.—But earnest expostulation, and even fiery eloquence, were in vain. Ahaz could not be approached either on the side of religion or patriotism, and he proceeded to ransack the Temple and his own palace for treasures that he might send a present to Tiglath-pileser.

Siege of Jerusalem raised—Edomite and Philistine Attacks.—No doubt his necessity was pressing. The allied army from the north had indeed raised the siege of Jerusalem, but only to turn their arms against the Judahite possessions in Edom, and secure their independence for that people, on the understanding that they should in turn attack Judah. Thus Elath was lost for ever; and Ahaz found himself beset by Edomites on the one side and Philistines on the other, and saw town after town fall away from him into hostile hands.

Tiglath-pileser invades Syria and Israel.—The Assyrian king accepted the terms offered by Ahaz. He invaded the territory of Damascus and Israel, and thus drew off the immediate danger from Judah. For the allied forces of Rezin and Pekah marched northwards to suffer a complete defeat. *In the days of Pekah king of Israel came Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, and took Ijon, and Abel-beth-maachah, and Janoah, and Kedesh, and Hazor, and Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali, and he carried them captive to Assyria.*

Fate of Rezin and Pekah.—On a sadly mutilated tablet we have Tiglath-pileser's own account of his victory: ¹ "The town Gaalad (Gilead), Abel, . . . the land Beth-Omri (Samaria), . . .

¹Schrader, *Cuneiform Inscriptions and the Old Testament*, vol. i.

I turned it all into Assyrian territory. . . . The land Beth-Omri . . . the district . . . the whole of its inhabitants and their property I deported to Assyria. Pekah, their king, I slew; Hosea I appointed to rule over them." On another tablet, a list of vassal princes contains the name *Joachaz* (Ahaz) of Judah.

Another fragment confirms the biblical account of the fate of Rezin. Damascus was taken, and its inhabitants deported to Kir. Rezin was slain, and his generals crucified. But this occupied the Assyrian king two years.

Prophecy of Isaiah.—Isaiah's intervention had been in vain, and success was apparently on the side of Ahaz. But he makes known the inevitable result which he foresees, Judah's mournful ruin. Still, as a proof that the faith in Jehovah he had preached was no empty delusion, he rose in the midst of the depressing circumstances to the height of hope and trust. *If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established* (Isa. vii. 9), he had cried to Ahaz in his interview with the king. He goes on to affirm the converse. "If ye will believe, ye shall be established. Not now, perhaps, but hereafter a believing and trustful nation must become a kingdom of God, a kingdom of peace and righteousness." The hour when Isaiah parted from Ahaz *at the end of the conduit of the upper pool, in the highway of the fuller's field*, gave to the world a hope which the prophet himself must have felt could not be realised till a greater than man should appear to claim the name Messiah.

For unto us a child is born,

Unto us a son is given;

And the government shall be upon his shoulder:

And his name shall be called

Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God,

Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace (Isa. ix. 6).

Ahaz visits Tiglath-pileser at Damascus—His Altar.—The great king evidently expected from his willing vassal further acts of homage. Accordingly, after the capture of Damascus, Ahaz waited on Tiglath-pileser in that city. There he saw an altar that took his fancy. He sent a model of it to his priest Urijah in Jerusalem, and had it copied for the Temple. He called it "the great altar," and moved the brazen altar to make way for it, ordering Urijah to use it for the morning burnt-offering and the evening meal-offering. The Chronicler puts

into his mouth a profession of faith in the gods of the kings of Syria, *because they had helped them*. He made other changes in the Temple furniture, apparently with a view to accommodate his form of worship to Assyrian customs. Possibly it was an Assyrian, not a Syrian, altar which he copied, with the same idea of pleasing Tiglath-pileser. Incidental notices suggest that he introduced the Assyrian star and sun worship into Jerusalem, and even had sacred horses of the sun in the Temple precincts (2 Kings xxiii. 11, 12). Ahaz died about 730 B.C., and *Hezekiah his son reigned in his stead*.

XCI. FALL OF SAMARIA, AND END OF THE NORTHERN KINGDOM

2 KINGS XVII. PROPHECIES IN HOSEA, ISAIAH, AND MICAH.

Behold Jehovah cometh out of His place,
And will come down and tread upon the high places of the
earth,
And the mountains shall be molten under Him,
And the valleys shall be cleft
As wax before the fire,
As waters that are poured down a steep place ;
For the transgression of Jacob is all this,
And for the sins of the house of Israel.

ISRAEL—HOSHEA.

About 730 B.C. Reigned nine years.

Pekah of Israel, who had gained the throne by conspiracy and murder, himself fell a victim to conspiracy and murder. Hoshea ben-Elah smote him and slew him, probably, as we gather from the Assyrian records, at the instigation of Tiglath-pileser. The new usurper was an improvement on his predecessors. *He did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, yet not as the kings of Israel that were before him.*

Attempt to throw off Assyrian Yoke.—As soon as he found himself firmly seated on the throne he seems to have taken advantage of the change of rulers in Assyria to cease paying his tribute. Shalmaneser IV. became king in 727 B.C., and reigned till 722. Unfortunately the only notice of him in Assyrian records yet

discovered is a weight inscribed with his name, and the presence of his name in the list of governors, which fixes his date. His attack on Hoshea and recovery of the tribute is told us in a sentence of the Book of Kings.

Policy of Egypt.—The Israelite king was no willing vassal like Ahaz. He continued restive, and looked about for aid in shaking off the yoke. The northern kingdom had been inaugurated under Egyptian influence, and its last monarch turned his eyes to the same power. An enterprising prince, himself a usurper, *Shabaka* or *Sabako*, known apparently to the Hebrews as So (or Seve), an Ethiopian, had just founded the twenty-fifth dynasty, and, after firmly establishing himself, was turning his attention to foreign affairs. Indeed it was time for Egypt to do something to check Assyria in mere self-defence, and the natural policy was to incite the Syrian states to resistance, and join them in alliance.

Alliance of Israel and Egypt.—Hoshea welcomed So's overtures, and again withdrew his tribute. He did not hear or would not listen to the prophetic warnings which, from now till their predictions were fulfilled, the seers never ceased uttering against this fatal policy. They saw clearly that Egypt was a broken reed to lean upon. Nothing could save from Assyria but a miracle, and if that miracle was not to be wrought, there was nothing for it but to bend humbly and trustfully and in penitence, before the storm, and then hope. For the life of such a nation as that of Jehovah could not come to an end, even if the mightiest of world-empires were its enemy.

Renewed warning of Isaiah.—A very beautiful passage in Isaiah (Isa. xxviii.), full, it is true, of obscure allusions, appears to relate to this period. For when Shalmaneser was marching to Samaria, as he at once did, to crush his traitor-vassal, Judah, it may be readily understood, was directing an anxious gaze northwards. Isaiah's keen glance was always on Ephraim. He saw its nobles now carousing, crowned with flowers, but with flowers that fade. And his eyes turned back to Judah to see there the same gluttony and riot. Even the judges, priests, and prophets have gone out of the way. They do not see clearly. Their vision is darkened. And this without any excuse, for if there were no true seers in Ephraim, there was one in Judah. But the people only mocked at him, saying he treated them like children with his reiterated recommenda-

tions, *line upon line and precept upon precept*. "Ah!" he said, "it shall be so. This monotone shall indeed sound in your ears. But it will be a childish monotone no longer. You shall listen to the harsh and uncouth tones of a foreign invader always making the same vexatious demand." An Assyrian tongue was to speak to them.¹

The Egyptian policy had its advocates in Jerusalem too. The prophet told them such an alliance was only lies and deception. There was but one foundation-stone, Zion; not the fortress rising over the Kedron, but an ideal Zion, built on righteousness and justice. The Assyrian power must crush everything. Nay, it is Jehovah's instrument. *The day of Jehovah* is at hand. Let Judah beware.

The prophet Micah.—About the same time, besides Isaiah, there rises up in Judah a like-minded prophet, perhaps a pupil of Isaiah's, Micah of Moresheth. He, too, is certain about the downfall of Samaria.

*Therefore I will make Samaria as an heap of the field,
And as the plantings of a vineyard;
And I will pour down the stones thereof into the valley,
And I will discover the foundations thereof* (Micah i. 6).

Siege of Samaria—Sargon succeeds Shalmaneser IV.—On Shalmaneser's approach, perhaps in 725, Hoshea surrendered, and probably shared the fate of the others made captive later on. But Samaria would not so easily yield, and Shalmaneser besieged it. Owing to its strong position it was able to hold out for three years, and before it fell Shalmaneser had died, to make way for Sargon. He is the unnamed *king of Assyria* who *took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah, and in Habor on the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes*. Sargon himself records their capture: "The city Samaria I besieged, I captured; twenty-seven thousand two hundred and eighty of its inhabitants I carried away; fifty chariots of them I took; my viceroy I placed over them; the tribute of the former king I imposed on them." And from another Assyrian source we learn that this was in the year of his accession, 722 B.C.²

End of the Kingdom of Israel—Its virtues and defects.—"Thus ends, as far as regards religious history, after an

¹ Driver, *Isaiah: His Life and Times*, p. 50.

² Schrader, *Cuneiform Inscription and the Old Testament*, vol. i.

existence of two hundred and fifty years, this little kingdom, which was in the highest sense creative, but which did not know how to crown its edifice."¹ It had indeed done the work assigned it in the providence of God, and disappeared when it lost confidence in its vocation. It was in the north that prophecy, even if it had not its birth there, grew to a vigorous maturity. It is to the north that we owe, according to critics, the early framework of sacred history. There was a force and freedom amid the northern tribes which gave room for expansion that would hardly have been possible under the despotism of the kingdom of Judah. But there was a lack of organisation and of central unity, and these had a necessary part to play in preparing a religion for the world. This part was reserved for Jerusalem.

Religion in the Kingdom of Israel.—In regard to its religion, Israel of the north has perhaps hardly had justice. History and the documents relating to the religious movement have been handed down from Judah. The Books of Kings were compiled at Babylon after the fall of Jerusalem, and the reiterated denunciation of the "sin of Jeroboam" is in great part due to the fact that in the compiler's day the unity of the place of worship had become a religious law. Therefore Ephraim finds no forgiveness for its numerous sanctuaries, the altars which every locality possessed. But Judah at the same date was also covered with "high places" and "pillars" and symbolic images. Even the idolatry of the molten calves of Dan and Bethel had its counterpart in that of the brazen serpent, till Hezekiah destroyed it. And the monstrous custom of passing children through the fire, divining, sorcery, and witchcraft, condemned by all enlightened Israelites, were even more prevalent at Jerusalem than they were in Samaria. In the south, no less than in the north, Canaanite sanctuaries had been adapted for Jehovah's worship, and Canaanite errors and superstitions had coloured the faith of Judah as it had that of Israel. What appears to have been wanting in the north was the tenacious grasp of an ideal and the power of reform. Even Elijah's religious revolution died at its birth.

Fate of the Ten Tribes.—It is an historical fable that the ten tribes were deported in mass and disappeared into some unknown region, where the curious have ever since been

¹ Renan, *History of the People of Israel*, bk. iv. ch. xxiv.

seeking in vain for their descendants. For only the *élite* of the nation were carried off, officials and proprietors, the army and priesthood. Even if we may accept Sargon's figure, twenty-seven thousand two hundred and eighty as the number of captives, it was only a fragment of a people whose wealthy families we saw numbered sixty thousand. Of those deported, the bulk no doubt went to form that Jewish population which made Babylonia a second Palestine. Many must have drifted to Judah, which, by its promise of stability, had long possessed an attraction for those weary of the anarchy of the north.

Religion in Samaria after the Conquest.—The great mass of Israelites remained to become subjects of Assyria. Mingled with them was that foreign element introduced according to the Ninevite custom. The religious idea of the time would render it compulsory on them to assume the religion of the country. When the lions that infested the Jordan valley attacked some of the settlers, it seemed a judgment from Jehovah for their neglect of Him, *because they knew not the manner of the God of the land.*

They begged that one of the deported priests of Samaria might be sent back to preach to them this manner, and worship was re-established at Bethel. But the feeling was far from universal, and *every nation, we read, made gods of their own, and put them in the high places which the Samaritans had made, and though they feared Jehovah they served their own gods, after the manner of the nations from among whom they had been carried away.*

All this was to have momentous results. The Judahites, when they returned from captivity, no longer recognised the inhabitants of Samaria as flesh of their flesh. Foreign rule and foreign influences had made them into something different from what they were. Jew and Samaritan were to be henceforth implacable foes.

XCII. HEZEKIAH

2 KINGS xviii. 1-9; 2 CHRON. xxix.-xxxi.

The outworn rite, the old abuse,
The pious fraud transparent grown,
The good held captive in the use
Of wrong alone—

These wait their doom from that great law
Which makes the past time serve to-day;
And fresher life the world shall draw
From their decay.

JUDAH—HEZEKIAH.

About 730 B.C. *Reigned twenty-nine years.*

Increased Importance of Jerusalem.—The destruction of Samaria led to the exaltation of Jerusalem. It may become now the religious capital which Solomon meant it to be, for it no longer has a rival. At least, if Jehovah is to have other high places of worship, they will be Hebron and Beersheba, not Samaria or Bethel.

A movement gains in intensity according to the degree of its concentration. The force of the religious movement kindled by the prophets was now to be concentrated in one little district, practically in one city, for Judah was Jerusalem, as France is Paris. This involved much of the narrowness and hardness which eventually characterised Judaism. But at the same time the movement contained that which could make it “not a local religion, not a religion tied down to any particular country, but one susceptible of being practised in all countries, and embraced by the most divergent races,” for out of it by and by was to come Christianity.¹

Character of Hezekiah.—Two great men, Hezekiah and Isaiah, are at the bottom of this remarkable movement which went so far to decide the religious future of the world. Hezekiah succeeded his father Ahaz a few years after the opening of the decade 730-720. He was of a different stamp from his father. His temperament was towards piety and justice. “Peace and truth were the watchwords of his reign. When the merits of the kings were summed up after the fall of the monarchy, Hezekiah was, by a deliberate judgment, put at the very top.” *He trusted*

¹ Renan, *History of the People of Israel*, bk. v. ch. i.

in Jehovah the God of Israel ; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor among them that were before him. He was twenty-five on his accession. His mother's name was Abi, or Abijah, the daughter of Zechariah. His long reign of twenty-nine years is memorable for religious reform, for literary activity, and for the great deliverance from Assyria.

Religious Reform—Renewal of Temple Worship.—There can be little doubt but that the religious improvements carried through by Hezekiah indicated, and were accompanied by, a moral improvement too. But it is only on a change in outward observances that the historians dwell. The Temple received the king's first attention. Not only had it been neglected in the reign of Ahaz, but it had been closed to worship altogether. The great doors were now opened, and priests and Levites bestirred themselves in purifying the sanctuary, and putting everything in order.

Then was offered a vast sacrifice in expiation of the national guilt, all the details of which are amply told by the Chronicler.

Revival of the Passover.¹—Immediately on this followed the revival of the Passover, of which no celebration had been recorded since the time of Joshua. It was attended not only by the whole population of Judah, but by *many of Ephraim and Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun.* Posts had indeed been sent all through Canaan, north as well as south, with a summons to the Feast. “It was characteristic of the true spirit of the religion of David that, when these unusual guests arrived without the prescribed oblations, the king overlooked it in consideration of their pure intentions.” *For Hezekiah had prayed for them, saying, The good Jehovah pardon everyone that setteth his heart to seek God, Jehovah the God of his fathers, though he is not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary.*

Removal of the High Places.—The Book of Kings dwells only on another side of the reformation. *He removed the high places, and brake the pillars, and cut down the Asherah, and he brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made : for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it ; and he called it Nehushtan* (a mere piece of brass).

None of these practices had before seemed inconsistent with the loyalty to Israel's God. But “innocent as they seemed to be, they were yet, like the golden calves in the northern kingdom,

¹ Stanley, *Jewish Church*, Lect. XXXVIII. vol. ii, 465-467.

and on exactly similar grounds, inconsistent with the strict unity and purity of the national worship, and had an equal tendency to blend with the dark polytheism of neighbouring nations. It was reserved for Hezekiah to make the first onslaught on them. He was, so to speak, the first reformer; the first of the Jewish Church to protest against institutions which had outlived their usefulness, and which the nation had outgrown."

Spiritual Reformation.—But these outward reforms were significant of something much more important. A great step was made in Hezekiah's reign, under the influence of the prophets, towards the fusion of religion and morality. Two ideas make themselves conspicuously clear. First, Jehovah demands in his worshippers purity of heart and sincerity of purpose. Whether an effort was made towards confining sacrifice to the Temple is doubtful. The belief that in Zion was Jehovah's one dwelling-place belongs still, perhaps, to a later age. But that He truly dwelt with *those who acknowledged their offences and sought His face* (Hos. v. 15), and only with such, was now the prophetic teaching.

Improved Position of the Poor.—And the rights of the poor and weak were proclaimed. The poor man came to be regarded as Jehovah's friend. The words "humble" and "poor," both in Hebrew from the same root, began now to be used indiscriminately for each other, and the pious to be known either as "the poor of God," or "the humble of the land," "the weak of the earth." The beatitude of Christ was anticipated, *Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

Absence of Persecution.—In an ardent faith and an absolute trust, Hezekiah appears to have presided over these religious and moral movements, and yet without intolerance. The attempt to make people believe the truth by means of persecution did not commend itself to him.

Growth of Hebrew Literature.—Hezekiah's reign has been called the classic epoch of Hebrew literature. It was then that the Hebrew language attained perfection. Isaiah, it has been said, wrote like a Greek. And besides Isaiah and his school, which may have been large as well as influential, we have indication of talented authors in other branches than prophecy. The king was himself a poet, and a piece ascribed to him is preserved in the Book of Isaiah (Isa. xxxviii. 9-20). He was

also a patron of learning. A body of literary men, *the men of Hezekiah* (Prov. xxv. i.), sprang up around him, bent mainly upon making extracts and compilations. But we can hardly refuse to this Hebrew academy the probable merit of possessing original authors, and lyrical as well as parabolic poetry no doubt had its fair representatives in it. Isaiah, it is certain, could write psalms (Isa. xii.). Part of the literary work of Hezekiah's reign consisted, it may be, in rescuing from oblivion compositions of the northern kingdom which else could not have survived its destruction. Possibly the Song of Songs was among the pieces saved in this way.



XCIII. THE ASSYRIANS AT THE GATES OF JERUSALEM

2 KINGS xviii. 13-xx. ; 2 CHRON. xxxii. ; PROPHECIES OF ISAIAH.

The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold,
And his cohorts were gleaming with purple and gold,
And the sheen of their spears were like stars on the sea,
When the blue waves roll nightly on deep Galilee.

Like the leaves of the forest when summer is green,
That host with their banners at sunset were seen ;
Like the leaves of the forest when autumn hath blown,
That host on the morrow lay withered and strown.

Military Measures of Hezekiah.—In the first years of his reign Hezekiah adhered to the foreign policy of his father Ahaz. He avoided a rupture with Assyria. But in view of what might happen he set himself to strengthen the military and financial resources of his kingdom. One necessary point claimed especial attention, a water supply for Jerusalem in case of siege. He brought the water of the Virgin's Spring (Gihon) outside the walls, within the city by a conduit. An interesting inscription left by the masons employed on the work of making the tunnel is referred, by many scholars, and with much probability, to this time.

Rise of an Egyptian Party.—All this meant taxation, and while patriots would not grudge the outlay on defences, many of them resented the yearly tribute to Assyria. A powerful

party appeared in favour of alliance with Egypt instead. Hezekiah was kept from encouraging them by the remonstrances of Isaiah, who now insisted on the maintenance of those relations with Assyria which, in the reign of Ahaz, he had vehemently opposed. The die was cast, and Egypt at any rate was impossible as an ally.

Fate of the Opponents of Assyria.—There was an object lesson of this in the fate of Hanno of Gaza, who, with his ally, Sabaco, was crushed at Raphia by Sargon, the reigning Assyrian prince. Raphia is half-way between Gaza and the “Brook of Egypt” (Isa. xxvii. 12), the Wady-el-Arish, which divided that country from Palestine, and Sargon would at once have turned his army against Judah had its king followed Hanno’s example.

The lesson was repeated shortly after in the case of Ashdod, which, for joining in an Egyptian league, was besieged by the “Tartan,” or Assyrian generalissimo. This event, which happened in 711, forms the subject of Isaiah xx.

Embassy of Merodach-baladan to Hezekiah.—The biblical account of Hezekiah’s reign agrees with what we learn of it from Assyrian inscriptions, except in the order of the events. The chronological arrangement must be altered. It was in Sargon’s reign, and not that of his successor Sennacherib, that Merodach-baladan, who made himself king at Babylon, in independence of Nineveh, sent an embassy to Jerusalem, nominally to congratulate Hezekiah on his recovery from the sickness of which he so nearly died, but really to try to secure him as an ally against Sargon.

And Hezekiah hearkened unto them, and showed them all the house of his precious things, the silver and the gold, and the spices, and the precious oil, and the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures; and there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah showed them not.

This conduct drew a sharp rebuke from Isaiah, and a prediction of the Babylonian captivity.

Merodach-baladan crushed.—And if Hezekiah hoped that a successful diversion would be made against the empire of Assyria to the east he was disappointed; for by 709 Sargon had reduced Merodach-baladan to submission.

Alliance with Tirhakah, king of Egypt.—Sargon died in 705 B.C., and about the same time Tirhakah usurped the throne

of Egypt. He energetically resumed the policy of combating Assyrian influence in Syria, and the hopes of the Egyptian party at Jerusalem revived. They even gained the ear of the king, and it was in consequence of their representatives that Hezekiah *rebelled against the king of Assyria, and served him not* (1 Kings xviii. 7). His expedition against Gaza was an attempt to force the Philistines, in spite of the crushing blows they had received from Sargon, to support his rash policy. The success of Mero-dach-baladan, who revolted again immediately on the death of Sargon, and seized Babylon, gave a promising outlook for an alliance of the Syrian states with Egypt against Assyria. In vain did Isaiah, day by day, hour by hour, raise his warning voice (Isa. xxix.—xxxii.).

*Woe to the rebellious children, saith the LORD,
That take counsel, but not of Me.
And that cover with a covering, but not of My Spirit,
That walk to go down into Egypt,
To strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh,
And to trust in the shadow of Egypt.*

In dismay he actually saw an embassy start from Jerusalem to complete the dangerous alliance.

*They carry their riches upon the shoulders of young asses,
And their treasures upon the bunches of camels,
To a people that shall not profit them !
For Egypt helpeth in vain, and to no purpose :
Therefore have I called her Rahab that sitteth still.*

Sennacherib, king of Assyria.—Sennacherib (or Sanherib), the son and successor of Sargon, could not turn his attention to Syria and Egypt till after an elapse of three years, during which he vanquished his enemies in the region of the Tigris and Euphrates.

His March to the West.—At last he began his march westward, and we have his own account of it.¹ He took the valley of the Orontes and the coast, crushing the Phœnician cities, Tyre excepted, on his course, and was only stopped when he came to Ekron. There he met an Egyptian army, which he cut to pieces, and, seizing the city, directed part of his forces against Lachish, and with the rest ravaged Judah, taking, as he boasts, forty-six strong cities, and fortresses and towns without number.

¹ Taylor Cylinder, British Museum ; Bull-inscription of Kouyunjik.

Hezekiah submits to pay a Fine to Assyria.—Hezekiah was convinced now of his mistake, and hastened to send messengers to Lachish to make his submission, saying: *I have offended; return from me, that which thou puttest upon me I will bear.*

Three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold (about £266,900) was the fine imposed, and to pay it the king had not only to exhaust all his accumulated treasure, but even to strip the gold from the doors and pillars of the Temple.

Sennacherib demands the Surrender of Jerusalem—Attitude of Isaiah.—But Sennacherib changed his mind, and demanded the surrender of the capital. This was in 701 B.C., the critical year, as it has been called, of Isaiah's life. Hitherto his policy had been one of submission to Assyria. Now he steps forward in all his greatness as patriot prophet to spread encouragement and hope through the dismayed court and city, and promise deliverance (Isa. x.—xii. 6). The scourge of God was now too proud to be allowed to be any longer the Divine instrument. Sennacherib, like Napoleon in his Russian campaign, had essayed a task too great for him. He was defying heaven instead of serving it. *Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? Shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? As if a rod should shake him that lifteth it up, or as if a staff should lift up him that is not wood.*

The Assyrians before Jerusalem.—Sennacherib had despatched against Jerusalem his three principal officers, the Tartan, Rabсарis, Rabshakeh, *i.e.* the commander-in-chief, the chief of the eunuchs, and the grand cupbearer. The Assyrian army encamped in the plain north-west of Jerusalem, near the conduit of the Upper Pool. Negotiations were opened. Hezekiah sent to represent him his chamberlain Eliakim ben Hilkiah, Shebna the secretary, and the historiographer Joab ben Asaph.

The Rabshakeh's Speech.—The Grand Cupbearer explained to the Jews how presumptuous the conduct of Hezekiah had been, and how vain was reliance on Egypt. Even their own God, should they profess trust in Him, would not support a king who had demolished His high places. Nay, Jehovah had shown His preference for the Assyrians in sending them against his land to destroy it. And as to those who trusted in

chariots and horses, why, if the Assyrians gave them two thousand horses, they would not find riders for them. The city population were on the walls and heard all that passed. Terrified at the effect such words might produce on the crowd, the Jewish functionaries begged the Rabshakeh to speak in Aramaic, not in Hebrew. But he purposely addressed the multitude, warning them of the terrible evils of a siege, and promising an exchange to a fertile land, for, as for Jehovah, He was on the side of Assyria, and would not save them.

Isaiah and the King.—But now Isaiah's time was come. Hezekiah, hearing what had passed on the walls, rent his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth, and went to pray in the Temple. He also sent Eliakim with a cortege in mourning attire to Isaiah. This was the prophet's reply: *Be not afraid of the words that thou hast heard, wherewith the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed Me. Behold, I will put a spirit in him, and he shall hear a rumour, and shall return to his own land.*

Other and still more reassuring messages followed:—

Thus saith Jehovah the God of Israel, Whereas thou hast prayed to Me against Sennacherib king of Assyria, I have heard thee. This is the word that Jehovah hath spoken concerning him:

The virgin daughter of Zion hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn.

The daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee.

Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed?

And against whom hast thou exalted thy voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high?

Even against the Holy One of Israel.

Therefore thus saith Jehovah concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there; neither shall he come before it with shield, nor cast a mound against it. For I will defend this city to save it, for Mine own sake, and for My servant David's sake.

Destruction of the Assyrians.—And so it was.

For the angel of death spread his wings on the blast,
And breathed in the face of the foe as he passed,
And the eyes of the sleepers waxed deadly and chill,
And their hearts but once heav'd and for ever were still.

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And the tents were all silent, the banners alone,
The lances unlifted, the trumpet unblown.

And the widows of Asshur are loud in their wail,
And the idols are broke in the temple of Baal,
And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword,
Hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord.

Herodotus' Account of this Event.—Herodotus (ii. 141) gives the following account of the overthrow of Sennacherib and the destruction of his army. He places it in the reign of the Egyptian king Sethôn, “a priest of Hephaistos,” whom the informants of the historian preferred to crown with royal honours as the conqueror on the occasion, through dislike of celebrating the praises of the Ethiopian Tirhakah, who was then the actual Pharaoh. “Afterwards, therefore, when Sanacharib, king of the Arabians and Assyrians, marched his vast army into Egypt (comp. 2 Kings xix. 9). . . . Sethôn collected such of the Egyptians as were willing to follow him, . . . and marched to Pelusium, which commands the entrance into Egypt, and there pitched his camp. As the two armies lay here opposite one another, there came in the night a multitude of field-mice, which devoured the quivers and bowstrings of the enemy, and ate the thongs by which they managed their shields. Next morning they commenced their flight, and great multitudes fell, as they had no arms with which to defend themselves” (Rawlinson's Tr.). The mouse is regarded by some as the emblem of pestilence, and the *angel of Jehovah* who, in the Bible record, smote the Assyrians may, after 1 Chron. xxi. 14, be interpreted to imply some deadly epidemic. But opinions will still differ as to the identification of the event narrated by Herodotus with that described in the Bible, and whether the scene of the Assyrian destruction is to be placed in Egypt or Palestine is still an unsettled question.

The Assyrian Inscriptions.—Sennacherib's inscriptions are naturally silent about his defeat, but some scholars (*e.g.* Kittel and Schrader) see even in the Assyrian account of the campaign, which in all other respects confirms the biblical narrative, a consciousness that the triumphant career of the great monarch had been checked in Egypt, and that he had been compelled to retire.

XCIV. RELAPSE

2 KINGS xxi. ; 2 CHRON. xxxiii.

Shall the throne of wickedness have fellowship with thee,
Which frameth mischief by statute?
They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous,
And condemn the innocent blood.

MANASSEH.

About 700 B.C. Reigned fifty-five years.

Death and Burial of Hezekiah.—Hezekiah died about 700 B.C. For some reason untold he was not buried with his fathers in the royal sepulchres of the city of David, but outside it on the slope of the hill. In fact the royal burial-place received no more kings.

Idolatrous Excesses of Manasseh.—Manasseh was only twelve when he succeeded his father, beginning a reign which was to be the longest of any Hebrew monarch—fifty-five years. In accordance with the general laws of history we should look for a reaction against the strictness of morals which the close alliance of the prophetic body with the court had been able to enforce at Jerusalem. We are reminded of the outbreak of dissolute living at the Restoration. But we want more to account for the appalling lapse into heathenism which has made Manasseh's name infamous. Not only did he permit a renewal of worship at the high places. He built altars to Baal. He restored the Asherah that had been removed from the Temple. He adopted the strange and licentious rites of surrounding nations with the ardour of an apostate, building *altars*, as the Chronicler tells us, *for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of Jehovah*. The very name he gave his son was that of an Egyptian deity. He plunged into all the mysteries of sorcery, augury, and necromancy. Even the Assyrian star-worship found in the Jewish king a zealous patron. And, worse than all, he lighted once more at Jerusalem the fires of human sacrifice, himself committing his own child to the flames.

Explanation of the Relapse.—How is this to be explained? It was partly a revolt of popular sentiment against the strict

and sober conception of God and His will represented by Isaiah and his school. We must remember that monotheism was only the creed of the few, only just struggling into existence as a creed at all. In the eyes of most, Jehovah was only one of many existent deities, but the one that favoured Israel. And He had indeed enabled them to breathe again freely. The city was saved from destruction. But the brilliant prospects opened up by Isaiah did not fulfil themselves.¹ They were indeed ideals capable of only a spiritual fulfilment. But those who heard them proclaimed expected them to be literally accomplished; and still Judah was subject to Assyria. Who, then, had gained the victory, Sennacherib or Hezekiah, Jehovah or the gods of Asshur? Judah, during the early part of the seventh century, enjoyed a long and, as it seemed, an undisturbed time of peace; but what was this repose under the sceptre of Assyria as compared with the prospect held out by Isaiah? If Judah thus lived merely by the grace of Assyria, why withhold from the gods of Assyria the worship which seemed their due?

This feeling seems to have prevailed, and it fell in with the wishes of those who clung to the old Canaanite ideas of worship, with its altars on high places, its images, and its voluptuous accompaniments.

Influence of the Queen-Mother—The Prophets to be attacked.—Possibly the influence of the queen-mother Hephzibah may have helped the heathen tendencies. Isaiah has many bitter denunciations of the ladies of his day, and they can hardly be expected to have been on the side of those who so denounced their finery and accomplishments. And like Jezebel with Ahab, this princess may have instigated Manasseh to that course of persecution which made Jerusalem stream with *innocent blood* from one end to another. For the prophets could not keep silent, and their extermination was decided on. Isaiah himself, according to tradition, was one of the martyrs. Habakkuk may have been among those who protested against the infamous practices of this reign. Hozai, who is said by the Chronicler to have written a history of the time, would be another, unless, as in the A.V., we take this name to be a mistake for the plural and translate *the seers*. They recalled the fate of Samaria and predicted a worse for Jerusalem.

I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria, and the

¹ Kittel, *History of the Hebrews*, bk. iii. ch. vi.

plummet of the house of Ahab, and I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish, wiping it, and turning it upside down.

The narrative of Kings leaves Manasseh in his sin. *All that he did and the sin that he sinned*, such is the unusual summary of his life, written, it is said, in the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah. There is not a ray of light amid the darkness of this account. It only tells us that when he slept with his fathers *he was buried in the garden of his own house, in the garden of Uzza*, a spot preserving, it may be, the name of the ill-fated profaner of the ark.

Manasseh carried captive to Babylon.—But a late narrative incorporated in Chronicles has much more to tell of this king. Because Manasseh and his people gave no heed to the prophets, *the Lord brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh in chains, and bound him with fetters, and brought him to Babylon.* There he repented and humbled himself and prayed, and the God of His fathers *heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that Jehovah He was God.*

Esarhaddon, king of Assyria.—Esarhaddon had succeeded Sennacherib in 681 as king both of Assyria and Babylonia, and appears to have thought it politic to let Babylon share with Nineveh the honour of being a royal residence, for he rebuilt the parts of the city which his father had destroyed, and kept his court there from time to time. Manasseh only appears in his records in a list of vassal princes summoned to contribute towards the expenses of his new palace, but there is no improbability in the story that the Jewish king was taken prisoner to Babylon, nor even in the statement of his release, for the treatment described in Chronicles is exactly that which Necho the Egyptian king received from Assur-bani-pal, Esarhaddon's successor.

Repentance of Manasseh.—The Prayer of Manasses, which forms part of the Apocrypha, is of late date, but may have been based on a composition extant when the Chronicler gave the touching account of the monarch's repentance, and of his attempts to undo some of the mischief of his reign by religious reforms, and of the steps taken to strengthen the defences of the country—*the outer wall to the city of David, and the garrisons of valiant captains in all the fenced cities of Judah,*

measures ignored perhaps in the earlier histories because of their signal want of success.

One detail in the reform thus ascribed to Manasseh is significant in view of the religious development of Israel. He did not abolish the worship at high places, but we are told the people now sacrificed at them *only unto Jehovah their God*. Before the exclusive claims of Mount Zion had been asserted, there was no suspicion of wrong in honouring the nation's God at other places.

The Book of Job.—The Book of Job is of very uncertain date, but may not unreasonably be connected with this period. The problem of the righteous man suffering instead of being triumphant in life's struggle would naturally occupy many minds, and be approached from many sides. The persecutions under Manasseh must have led to reflections on the Divine intention in the permission of suffering, and encouraged the belief that the troubles of the righteous are not a necessary mark of God's displeasure. The author of the magnificent poem, which has for its hero the pious man of Uz, left the problem unsolved, but in his wonderful treatment of it supplied the world with noble thoughts about the universe and nature, expressed in words whose strong and varied music has never been surpassed.

AMON.

Reigned two years.

Amon was twenty-two when he succeeded his father about 640. He had but a short reign of two years, but they were enough to stamp him in the estimate of posterity as equally impious with his father. The party true to Jehovah was in fact almost crushed. It could but lie still, biding its time and crying to God in plaintive hymns, some of which may possibly survive in the Psalter. The opening verses of Psalm xciv. may have expressed the feelings of the pious during the reigns of Manasseh and his son—

*O Jehovah, Thou God to whom vengeance belongeth ;
Thou God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shine forth.
Lift up Thyself, Thou Judge of the earth.*

Amon, whatever his character, was popular with his subjects,

for when he was murdered in a palace revolution the people arose against the conspirators and slew them all. What we should like to know is the part, if any, taken at this time by the religious reformers.

Amon was buried, like his father, in the garden of Uzza.

XCV. JOSIAH

2 KINGS xxii., xxiii. 1-34; 2 CHRON. xxxiv., xxxv.

The remembrance of Josias is like the composition of the perfume that is made by the art of the apothecary: it is sweet as honey in all mouths, and as music at a banquet of wine.

JOSIAH.

About 640 B.C. Reigned thirty-one years.

Amon's son Josiah, made king by a popular election, in spite of the palace party that had conspired against his father, was only eight years old when he began his reign of thirty-one years.

Regency of Jedidah.—His mother Jedidah, daughter of Adaiah of Bozkath, was probably the ruling power during his minority, and a court lady was not likely to show herself zealous for a form in religion. It is certain we hear of no change for the better during the first decade of the new reign.

Revival of Prophecy.—But there were hopeful signs in the air. The spirit of Isaiah, though it had almost died out, revived again. Prophecy began again to gain ground, and would venture into the light of day. The persecution was at least over.

Prophecies of Zephaniah. — The signal for this new prophetic development appears to have been given by Zephaniah or, as the Greek translators called him, Sophonias, a Judahite, who traced back his descent to a Hezekiah, possibly the king of that name. The brief fragment handed down to us in his name is exceedingly sombre. *The day of Jehovah*, an expression already current in Israel, is the word always on his lips, a day of wrath and punishment both for

Judah and the rest of the world. *The great day of Jehovah is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of Jehovah* (Zeph. i. 14). It is the birth of the hymn, *Dies ira, dies illa*. The wickedness of Judah and Nineveh is giving wings of haste to this terrible day. Jerusalem will be *searched with candles* (Zeph. i. 12). Nineveh will be made *a desolation*.

His Description of Jerusalem. — The prophet gives an awful picture of the corruption at Jerusalem. It is a worldly city full of horrible things. The worship of Baal is formally recognised in it: there are people who prostrate themselves upon their roofs before the stars of heaven, and who swear indifferently by Jehovah or Moloch. It is deaf to all warning. Its chiefs, its judges, its priests are all unjust and prevaricating. Its prophets utter lies. Only a thorough reformation can save it from a terrible doom.

Nahum denounces Nineveh. — The destruction of wrath on Nineveh that has so long deserved it, is taken up by another prophet of the time, Nahum. He knows the city and empire of Assyria must fall, for out of it went he who *imagined evil against Jehovah, and committed wickedness* (Nah. i. 11).

Sardanapalus, king of Assyria. — Then who is to be the minister of the Divine wrath? Assyria had been recognised by Isaiah as the chosen instrument of God. But that prophet, too, had foretold how, lifted up by pride, the great world-power would fall in the very execution of its mission. And now the colossus, before which the nations had trembled, had indeed begun to totter. The supreme point of power had been reached under Esarhaddon. Under Assur-bani-pal (*Sardanapalus*), 669–625, the decline began and the end approached.

Revolt of Egypt and Media. — Psammetichus of Egypt, calling Greek soldiers to his aid, had thrown off the yoke about 645. About the same time came the revolt of the Medes and the foundation of the kingdom of Phraortes.

Invasion of the Scythians. — About 630 the Scythians, a horde of equestrian Asiatics, came swarming over all the western part of that continent, devastating as they went, like the Huns and Mongols at a later time. They, too, shook the Assyrian empire to its foundations. According to Herodotus (Herod. i. 105), they even penetrated into Syria and knocked at the gates of Egypt. And scarcely had the shock passed

when the Medes joined Babylon to strike the decisive blow at Nineveh, 608 B.C.

Perilous situation of Judah.—In the prophetic utterances of the time we seem to see, now the Scythian, now the Babylonian, hovering over doomed Judah. But their gloomiest forebodings were not realised. Once more mercy stepped in at the cry of repentance. The conversion of Josiah and his people to *the way of Jehovah* averted the day of wrath.

Jeremiah and the Party of Reform.—Among the influences which produced in the young king's eighteenth year such a memorable change, must be certainly reckoned the personality of Jeremiah. He was, it appears, one of a small body of ardent reformers who succeeded in getting access to the king. Shaphan the secretary, Hilkiah the priest, Huldah the prophetess, with her husband Shallum, were in this little band; but Jeremiah was by far the most important member of it.

Character of Jeremiah.—This great man was to Josiah what Isaiah had been to Hezekiah. Inferior to Isaiah in genius and literary skill, he surpasses him in tragic seriousness and in sympathy. No single one of all the Old Testament prophets comes so near to us in a human way as Jeremiah. He has all the powerful utterance of a Hosea, and at times can deal blows as heavy as Isaiah's; but at the same time his heart is overflowing with a human feeling for the misery of his people, and he weeps hot tears over the piteous fate of his fatherland. Yet duty to his God calls him and compels him to blame when he would willingly console. With a bleeding heart he enters on the terrible struggle with himself. And, though no nobler patriot ever lived, he bears the stigma of a traitor to his country for the sake of Jehovah and truth. He foresaw the end, and he must needs speak his vision.

The Spirit of his Writings.—The older prophets, beyond the darkness of doom, had always been able to perceive a bright dawn of hope. We call it the Messianic Hope. As conceived by Amos, Joel, Hosea, Micah, Isaiah, Zephaniah, the thought of outward restoration had predominated, though the language in which it was dressed was that of an *ideal*, not an actually possible, kingdom. But in Jeremiah the language is different. Though acquainted with an outward restoration, it is not this, nor the restoration of a remnant, Isaiah's favourite topic, that

constitutes his chief hope. *God's law in the heart*, and along with this *a new covenant*—this will be the mark of the Israel of the future. Up to this prophet the creed of Israel had been concerned only with the nation. It was with the nation that Jehovah had made His covenant, it was the nation He would redeem and save.

But now the idea of personal religion, that is of a personal relation to God, if not of an individual hope for the future, seems to come into view.

His Mission.—Jeremiah tells us that he entered on his prophetic career in the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign. He came, still almost a boy, from Anathoth, near Jerusalem. He was the son of a priest of that place, called Hilkiah. It was with great reluctance that he undertook a mission for which he felt too weak, but the Divine call was imperative, and he set himself heroically to the task which was to bring, as he fulfilled it, a life's martyrdom.

Surrounded by young men of a reforming spirit, Josiah was prepared for his work. He had already made tentative steps at reform when an event occurred which dashed aside all irresolution, and gave at one and the same time an impulse and a direction to his activity.

XCVI. THE LAW BOOK

The wise
(Minstrel or sage) out of their books are clay;
But in their books, as from their graves, they rise,
Angels, that side by side, upon our way,
Walk with and warn us.

REIGN OF JOSIAH—*continued.*

The Restoration of the Temple.—The Temple of Solomon again, as in the reign of Joash, needed repair, and Josiah, following in the exact line of his predecessor, sent Shaphan to Hilkiah the high priest with instructions to disburse the money collected for the maintenance of the building to the carpenters and other workmen.

Discovery of the Book of the Law (about 620 B.C.).—Shaphan was about to return when Hilkiah said to him, *I have*

found the book of the law in the house of Jehovah. Shaphan took the book, read it, and after making his report upon the repairs to the king, mentioned the fact that a book had been given him by Hilkiah. He proceeded to recite from the roll, the king listening. And when Josiah *had heard the words of the book of the law he rent his clothes*, and immediately despatched those about him, Ahikam, and Achbor, and Azaiah, with Shaphan and Hilkiah, saying, *Inquire of Jehovah for me and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book which is found.* Some terrible threats in it had greatly alarmed the king, and he felt that the neglect of the commands in this newly discovered law had justly excited the wrath of God.

The Prophecy of Huldah.—The envoys went to consult Huldah the prophetess, who lived at Jerusalem in the quarter called Mishneh. She replied that Jehovah was justly incensed, but that he would be appeased by a return to the strict observance of the law; at least the threatened evil would not fall in Josiah's day.

Contents of the "Book of the Law."—The exact contents of the roll discovered by Hilkiah, and called *the Book of the Law* and *the Book of the Covenant*, can only be conjectured from the effect it produced. That it had been completely ignored, if existent, in the reigns of former pious kings, is shown, both by the surprise its discovery created and the nature of Josiah's reforms, which were such as had never before been attempted. The book known to us as Deuteronomy, or its central portion, certainly formed part of it, if it did not, as so many critics think, constitute its whole, for not only are the threats contained in it expressly cited as making a deep impression on the mind of the king, but the allusions to the *Covenant* (2 Kings xxiii. 2, 3) refer to it (Deut. xxix. 1, 2), and Josiah's reforms followed step by step its fundamental principles. It is in this book, too, that we recognise the outcome of the prophetic spirit. It codifies, so to speak, what the prophets had always demanded and taught. And it may be noticed in this regard that both prophets and priests had a share in bringing about the public recognition of the book and in carrying out its demands.¹ It is the priest Hilkiah who finds, the prophetess Huldah who confirms it.

Reformation resolved on.—And no sooner had Josiah

¹ Kittel, *History of the Hebrews*, bk. iv. ch. vi.

received the answer of the prophetess than he acted on it. He *gathered unto him all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem, and to a huge assembly at the Temple, all the men of Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests and the prophets, and all the people, both small and great, he recited the book from end to end, standing by the pillar at the entrance of the inner court; and at its conclusion he made a covenant before Jehovah to walk after Jehovah, and to keep His commandments, and His testimonies, and His statutes, with all his heart, and all his soul* (a Deuteronomic phrase), *to confirm the words of this covenant that were written in this book; and all the people stood to the covenant.*

Destruction of Pagan Images, Sanctuaries, and High Places.—Then began the active work of reformation. At last the pagan worship was uprooted. Every vessel or image connected with the Baalim or the Asherim was destroyed, if of wood burnt, if of metal shattered to pieces and ground to powder. "The ashes were carried beyond the territory of Judah, or thrown on the numerous graves along that vast cemetery, the necropolis of the Kidron valley. Then fell in rapid succession the houses of those who ministered to the licentious rites close by the Temple, and the sanctuaries that stood just outside the gates of Jerusalem."¹ Even the high places *from Geba to Beersheba* were now attacked. They were defiled, so as to make future worship there impossible. Nor were the priests who had ministered at them considered worthy of service in the Temple. Tophet, too, *which is in the valley of the children of Hinnom, he defiled, that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech.* The sun-horses and chariots, dedicated by former kings, and the altars of Ahaz and Manasseh, shared the fate of the other idolatrous objects. Josiah was determined to have in Judah no vestige of the abomination of Ashtoreth, or of Chemosh, or of Milcom.

Vengeance on the Priests of Baal.—Even beyond the limits of Judah his zeal extended, to the old Israelite sanctuaries of Bethel and Samaria. Thither he came as the long-expected deliverer foretold by an ancient *man of God* (1 Kings xiii. 2). A terrible vengeance followed on those who had ministered at these shrines. Those still alive were executed on their own altars. Of those that were dead the bones were dug up and

¹ Stanley, *Jewish Church*, Lect. XXXIX, vol. ii. 501.

burnt upon the altars. There was one exception. Josiah spied a monument, and was told it was the sepulchre of the man of God who had come from Judah to proclaim these very things. *And he said, Let him be; let no man move his bones.*

This great religious movement was fitly concluded by the observance of the Passover, *such a passover as had not been kept from the days of the judges that judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel, nor of the kings of Judah; but in the eighteenth year of king Josiah was this passover kept to Jehovah in Jerusalem.*

XCVII. GATHERING CLOUDS

But, in the midst of this bright shining day
I spy a black, suspicious, threatening cloud.

REIGN OF JOSIAH—*continued.*

The commendation passed upon Josiah for all he had effected is itself expressed in the phraseology of the Book of Deuteronomy. *And like unto him there was no king before him that turned to Jehovah with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him.* He had certainly tried to remove from his country everything denounced in that book, such as those *that had familiar spirits, and the wizards, and the teraphim and the idols, and all the abominations that were spied in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem.*

Harmony of the Prophets and the Priesthood. — And whether every statute appearing in that book actually became law and custom in Judah or not, it is certain that an attempt was made towards this end, which appeared desirable not only to the priests, but to the prophets also. For once the two were ranged side by side in the effort at reform. Hitherto the prophetic order had only noticed ritual to denounce the formalism which too often attended it. In attacking the high places, what the prophets had attacked had been the worship of Baal and other deities that had existed side by side with the worship of the true God. Now Jeremiah, himself of priestly birth, must

have used his influence to promote the capital step which made Jerusalem the one centre of worship.

Jerusalem the sole Religious Centre.—This idea had perhaps existed in some minds from the time of Solomon. The limited area of the territory of Judah now made it possible, no locality being more than twelve leagues distant from the capital. The Jerusalem priests, who, as we have seen, would not admit their country brethren to the altar, gained an immense ascendancy, and their power, afterwards to become so dominant, may be said to date from this time.

Josiah opposes Pharaoh-Necho.—Huldah had promised Josiah that he should be *gathered to his grave in peace*. But he died in battle. He had but tasted of the sweets of independence from the Assyrian yoke when he found danger threatening him from another power. About 610 B.C. Cyaxares the Mede, in company with Nabopolassar of Babylon, were engaged in the struggle with Assyria which was to end that power. Egypt seized the opportunity to strike in and recover its influence in Syria. It was at this time governed by Pharaoh-Necho, an ambitious and able ruler, celebrated for his attempt to construct a canal from the Nile to the Red Sea, and for the circumnavigation of Africa, which was made by the Phœnicians under his auspices. Necho marched an army to the Euphrates, calling, we must suppose, on Judah and the other Syrian states either to help him or remain neutral. Josiah would do neither. He opposed Necho's march.

Battle of Megiddo—Death of Josiah.—A battle took place at Megiddo in the Kishon plain. The Chronicler tells us that, like Ahab before him, the king disguised himself and went into the battle, but with as little security, for an arrow brought him a mortal wound. His body was taken to Jerusalem and buried *in his own sepulchre*, and Jeremiah composed a dirge over his fall, which was extant in the Book of Dirges when the Chronicler wrote. *And all the singing men and singing women spake of Josiah in their lamentations unto this day; and they made them an ordinance in Israel; and behold they are written in the lamentations.*

The coming Doom.—*Notwithstanding the Lord turned not from the fierceness of His great wrath, wherewith His anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked Him withal.* Such is the comment of the historian,

intended to suggest the evil days that were coming. But we learn from Jeremiah that it was not for the past, but for the present, that the Divine wrath was stirred. There had been a reformation in religious practices, but the people took no thought of repenting of the moral evils which had excited the Divine anger.

The new sanctity of the one place of worship, now left without a rival, itself became a snare.

The Temple of Jehovah, they cried, *The Temple of Jehovah*, as if the mere repetition of the words could save them. Jeremiah saw them thronging to the house of Jehovah to keep their fast, under the idea that they had simply not been zealous enough in worship, and that God could not possibly abandon His city, and he pronounced their hope to be superstitious. "*Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye have not known, and come and stand before Me in this house, which is called by My name, and say, We are delivered, that we may do all these abominations*"? (Jer. vii. 9).

The doom had gone out. Unless Jerusalem repented, it must fall. Even the Temple would not be spared.

In the same spirit, when the prophet summed up the character of Josiah, he praised him not for introducing religious reforms, but for doing justice to the poor, and thus proving that he knew Jehovah (Jer. xxii. 16).

Jerusalem at the mercy of Necho.—There was nothing to prevent Necho turning south and marching on Jerusalem. Herodotus says, that after defeating the Syrians at Magdolos (Megiddo) he took a large city called Cadytis, which may have been Jerusalem, which the Arabs call *El-Khods* (*Kadesh* = holy) (Herod. ii. 159). If he did not enter that place, it was because he did not choose to do so. Matters there, at all events, took a very tumultuous turn.

JEHOIAHAZ.

Reigned three months.

On the news of the death of Josiah the people proclaimed one of his younger sons, Jehoahaz (called by Jeremiah (xxii. 11) Shallum), aged twenty-three, king. He was the offspring of Hamutal, daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. Eliakim, an elder

brother, was apparently passed over as less patriotic and favouring an Egyptian alliance. At all events, Jehoahaz had only reigned three months when Necho sent an order from his headquarters at Riblah, in the land of Hamath, which the people of Jerusalem dare not disobey.

His Deposition.—It was to send Jehoahaz a prisoner to Riblah, and set on the throne his brother Eliakim, son of another queen of Josiah's, Zebidah. He took the name Jehoiakim. The deposed monarch was sent to Egypt, and Jeremiah has left a dirge on him. *Weep ye not for the dead, neither bemoan him; but weep sore for him that goeth away, for he shall return no more, nor see his native country* (Jer. xxii. 10).

XCVIII. PROPHET *VERSUS* KING

2 KINGS xxiii. 34-37; 2 CHRON. xxxvi. 5-8; JER. xxvi., xxxvi.

The time is out of joint; O cursed spite,
That ever I was born to set it right.

JEHOIAKIM.

About 610 B.C. Reigned eleven years.

Judah fined by Necho.—Egyptian terms were far milder than those of Assyria had been. Necho only imposed a tribute of one hundred talents of silver and one talent of gold (nominally about £40,000). But the country was poorer than in Hezekiah's reign, and the tax necessary to raise the tribute proved a heavy burden.

Jeremiah rebukes the King.—But Jehoiakim was not prevented by this from indulging in expensive building operations, conduct which drew a severe censure from Jeremiah (xxii. 14). This could hardly be because of a preference given to a *wide house and spacious chambers* over the narrow ill-lighted rooms of a Syrian house, but because such a course was inopportune and unpatriotic. The means by which the funds were raised were also no doubt unrighteous. Jehoiakim was trying to reign like a mere Oriental despot.

Jeremiah's Unpopularity.—Jeremiah thus became obnoxious to the court. Already he had been an object of dislike to the people, for his denunciations of their superstitious regard for the Temple, and when he declared that *Jerusalem would be as Shiloh*, the priests, the prophets, and the people rose in anger and threatened to kill him. But the princes and officers of the palace intervened to protect him, recalling how, in the time of Hezekiah, Micah had spoken as strongly, but had not on that account been put to death.

Fate of Urijah.—But Urijah ben Shemaiah of Kirjath-jearim did not fare so well. The awful threats which he uttered against the city and the land were more than king or people could brook. He fled to Egypt, but was brought back by Jehoiakim's command, and killed (Jer. xxvi. 20–24). Ahikam ben Shaphan was able to protect Jeremiah against the storm which seemed to threaten to swallow him up too.

Rise of Nebuchadnezzar.—But the calm was not to last long. An important event took place in the fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign (about 606 B.C.), which produced a permanent change in the political state of the East. A warrior of the first order appeared upon the world's arena in the person of Nabium-kudurri-utsur, who in the Books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel is properly called *Nebuchadnezzar*, but whom from Kings, Chronicles, and the Book of Daniel, we know as *Nebuchadnezzar*, a form too familiar to be discarded. He was, for nearly half a century, to display at Babylon the glory which had now departed for ever from Nineveh. The eyes of Israel's prophets were on this figure. He, not Necho, was the scourge prepared by God. It was he who was to accomplish the doom of Judah.

He defeats Necho at Carchemish.—This impression was produced by the battle of Carchemish, 605 B.C., in which Necho was completely routed by the young Babylonian prince, then commanding for his father Nabopolassar.

Jeremiah foresees the Doom of Judah.—From Carchemish Nebuchadnezzar advanced towards Egypt by the traditional route through Cœle-Syria adopted by the Assyrian expeditions. He marched slowly, subduing the populations as he passed. Jeremiah's certainty of the invader's mission redoubled as he drew nearer to Judæa. He foresaw the end of the enemies of Jehovah under this minister of God's wrath. But still he hoped for repentance and reform, and as his spoken warnings

had been so ineffectual, he now determined to give his predictions more weight by writing them down.

He puts his Prophecy in Writing.—The terrors of the Chaldean invasion stamped on parchment might produce a great effect. *This word came unto Jeremiah from Jehovah, saying, Take thee a roll of a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day I spake unto thee, from the days of Josiah unto this day.*

The Reading of the Prophecy.—Soon after this a great assemblage of people from all parts of the country gathered at Jerusalem to celebrate a fast. The courts of the Temple were crowded, and Jeremiah announced his intention of going there, but at the last moment sent his friend and secretary Baruch instead to read the roll to the people. From the doorway of one of the cells opening into the court, that of Gemariah ben Shaphan, he made the recitation, which produced a tremendous effect, and Micaiah ben Gemariah, seeing the people's emotion, at once went down to the secretary's chamber in the royal palace.

All the ministers—Elishama, Delaiah, Elnathan, Gemariah, Zedekiah—happened to be there. Micaiah told them of the recitation. They sent for Baruch, and after the manuscript had been read over again to them, they questioned him on the manner in which the roll had been dictated, and, advising him and Jeremiah to conceal themselves, reported the matter to the king, and showed him the roll.

Wrath of Jehoiakim.—It was December, and Jehoiakim was sitting in the winter apartments of the palace, a fire in a brazier before him. The ministers stood in the background, while Jehudi, one of the courtiers, read the roll. Scarcely three or four columns had been read when the king's anger broke forth. The words—*The king of Babylon shall certainly come and destroy this land, and shall cause to cease from thence man and beast*, might well exasperate him. He took the roll in one hand, the scribe's penknife in the other, and cut the manuscript into pieces, throwing them one by one into the fire.

The princes were in turn shocked. To burn the roll which contained the words of Jehovah seemed to them blasphemous. They entreated the king to stop, but in vain. Not only was the roll entirely consumed, but officers were despatched to take the prophet and his assistant. *But Jehovah hid them.*

This is the first instance on record of the attempt to suppress unwelcome truths by burning the books in which they are written. It was to be often repeated in ecclesiastical history, and always with the same result. For the one volume burnt, two leap into light. Truth always triumphs. The prophet was commissioned to rewrite all the words of the former book, and to add to them *many like words*.¹

XCIX. PATRIOTISM, MISTAKEN AND TRUE

2 KINGS xxiv. ; 2 CHRON. xxxvi. 9-17 ; JER. xxii.-xxv., xxvii., xxxii., xxxv. ; EZEK. xii.

The firm patriot then,
Who made the welfare of mankind his care,
Shall know he conquered.

REIGN OF JEHOIAKIM—*continued*.

There is a patriotism which is shortsighted, and regards only the immediate future. There is also a patriotism which looks on to greater and more distant issues. Jehoiakim and the court party, and the population of Jerusalem in general, and also some prophets, were patriotic in their hostility to Babylon and their determination to resist Nebuchadnezzar. Jeremiah and a few around him saw further. The true mission of Judah was not to preserve the holy city untouched, but to preserve the holy religion and the truth, which alas ! the city no longer guarded. And these true patriots knew the power of Babylon to be irresistible, because God's will was behind it. But in critical moments to foretell defeat, is to seem to be on the assailants' side.

Nebuchadnezzar at Jerusalem. — But for the moment Jeremiah appeared to have uttered predictions which were untrue. Nebuchadnezzar went to Jerusalem, but his visit issued in the quiet submission of Jehoiakim.

Nebuchadnezzar succeeds his Father. — The Babylonian prince was recalled home by the death of his father, and officially received the title, king of Babylon (604 B.C.), which

¹ Stanley, *Jewish Church*, Lect. XL. vol. ii. 538.

had already been given him by anticipation in Syria and Palestine.

Rebellion of Jehoiakim.—This state of peace in subjection lasted only three years in Judæa, when, without any apparent reason, Jehoiakim rebelled. He may have been goaded to this by a military party driven to madness by the reiterated assertions of Jeremiah, that all military preparations were an insult to God, and that repentance and prayer were now the only weapons of war. He was of a wilful disposition (Jer. xxii. 17), and Egypt may have played upon it for her own ends. But at least in revolting he might, like Hezekiah, have strengthened himself by a coalition with his neighbours; and his neglect of this cost him dear.

Judah ravaged by the neighbouring Peoples.—Nebuchadnezzar, unable himself to take the field immediately, instigated a raid of Syrians, Moabites, and Ammonites against Judah. Parties of Chaldeans from the garrisons in Syria joined the invaders.

Their ravages were frightful, and have left their traces in the writings of Jeremiah.

Are the birds of prey against her round about? Go ye, assemble all the beasts of the field, bring them to devour. . . . The whole land is made desolate, because no man layeth it to heart. Spoilers are come upon all the bare heights in the wilderness: for the sword of the Lord devoureth from one end of the land even to the other end of the land; no flesh hath peace (Jer. xii. 9).

This then was also a blow from the sword of Jehovah. And behind the brigandage of the nomads loomed the Chaldean power with its train of horrors. Egypt was reduced to impotence. It would certainly have been wiser to submit to the will of Jehovah manifested in the sword of Nebuchadnezzar.

Death of Jehoiakim.—How Jehoiakim hoped to succeed we do not know. We do not even know how he ended his life. The Book of Kings says *he slept with his fathers*. Jeremiah's prophecy points to a violent death. *Thus saith the Lord concerning Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah king of Judah, They shall not lament for him, saying, Ah my brother! or, Ah sister! they shall not lament for him, saying, Ah Lord! or, Ah his glory! He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem (Jer. xxii. 18–19).* He was only thirty-six when he died.

JEHOIACHIN.

598 B.C. *Reigned three months and ten days.*

Regency of Nehushta.—He was succeeded by his son Coniah or Jeconiah, who, according to the prevailing custom, changed his name to Jehoiachin (the meaning is the same) on ascending the throne. His mother was Nehushta, daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem, who really reigned during the three months her son was nominally king. It is against her chiefly that Jeremiah directs his fierce warnings.

The Chaldean Invasion.—Events meanwhile were hastening forwards. The Chaldean army was seizing one after another the cities of Judah and transporting their inhabitants. All who could, fled, some to Egypt, others to Jerusalem. The capital was crowded. Even the stern nomad Rechabites were compelled to seek its shelter, and Jeremiah made them the subject of an exhortation to the Jews to be as faithful to their covenant as these Kenites (1 Chron. ii. 55) to that of their fathers (Jer. xxxv.).

Nebuchadnezzar at Jerusalem.—The preparations for the siege of Jerusalem were commenced before the arrival of Nebuchadnezzar in person. Doubtless a miracle like that which had saved the city from Sennacherib was expected by the pious. But when the Babylonian monarch himself appeared on the scene hope deserted the besieged. Jehoiachin marched out of the city with his mother, all his household, and ministers of state, to make what terms he could.

Jehoiachin deposed—The First Captivity.—They were not easy. The king was deposed, and with mother, harem, officials, and all who could carry arms, deported to Mesopotamia. This was the first stage of the captivity. According to Jeremiah (lxi. 28), three thousand and twenty-three, about one-sixth of the population of Jerusalem, were carried away. But it comprised the whole civil and military aristocracy. There is, however, no mention of priests or Levites. Of prophets, Jeremiah, we know, remained, but Ezekiel was taken. The Book of Kings gives first ten thousand and then eight thousand as the number deported, which included *the craftsmen and the smiths*, and adds, *none remained save the poorest sort of people of the land*. The two statements are reconciled by supposing that the court party,

all the princes and all the mighty men of valour, amounted to two thousand. Of course the treasures, sacred as well as profane, were carried away. The brazen vessels of the Temple, however, were left.

The blow was not indeed so serious as anticipation had made it. City and Temple were still intact, and the course of civil and religious life was not arrested. Nebuchadnezzar placed the uncle of the deposed king, Mattaniah, son of Josiah and Hamutal, on the throne, with the name of Zedekiah. He was just twenty-one years old. It was 598 B.C.

ZEDEKIAH.

Reigned eleven years.

Fate of Jehoiachin.—After the departing Jehoiachin those left in Judah gazed with straining eyes, scarcely believing but that he would be restored. Could he be *cast away like a broken idol, a despised vessel?* (Jer. xxii. 26–28). Would the voice of the *young lion* be no more heard *on the mountains of Israel?* (Ezek. xix. 5, 9). Return was not to be. But under Evil-Merodach the captive was kindly treated. He was given precedence of all other subject-princes, and some semblance of royal state was allowed him (2 Kings xxv. 27).

Idolatry of Zedekiah.—Zedekiah's conduct of affairs, both domestic and foreign, was such as to arouse all the indignation of Jeremiah. *He did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, according to all that Jehoiakim had done*, is the historian's verdict. He permitted idols once more to be installed in the Temple. Once more incense to Baal arose from the roofs of Jerusalem. Heathen rites were secretly practised. Human sacrifices once more smoked to Moloch in the valley of Hinnom. No wonder the prophet of Anathoth continued to denounce a court so disloyal to the nation's God (Jer. xxxii).

He plans a Revolt.—In the fourth year of his reign Zedekiah made a journey to Babylon, apparently to assure his overlord of his fidelity, but in reality to gain time for a dangerous, a fatal policy. He was all the while negotiating and arming for revolt. There was hope of an alliance with the neighbouring vassal states (Jer. xxvii. 3). There was even prophetic support. One Hananiah ben Azur announced that the rule of Babylon was coming to an end. He went to and

fro in the city repeating the words, *I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon.*

Attitude of Jeremiah.—Thus prophet confronted prophet. How were the people to know which was false, which true, whether it was Jehovah's will that they should resist, or serve the king of Babylon? Both spoke in the Divine name. Jeremiah expressed a pathetic wish that his rival's more hopeful prediction might be fulfilled; but he felt that Israel's true future lay in present submission to the foreigner, who was the instrument of the Divine will, that the future depended not on the preservation of the outward framework of the State or the Church, but on the moral and spiritual attitude of the nation, or rather of the captive part of it. For he set small value on what remained. They were like *bad figs* (Jer. xxiv. 2) compared to good. The exiles were expiating their faults. Jehovah was purifying them, and He would replant and restore them. On the other hand, as Jerusalem did not reform, Zedekiah and his court would be exterminated. The house of David was nearly ended.

Prophecies of Ezekiel.—The same line was taken by Ezekiel in the active correspondence kept up between the captives and Jerusalem (Ezek. xii.). By the banks of Chebar he saw visions of the Temple—what it was, degraded and disfigured by idolatries, and what it might be, purged and renewed. He knows of the perfidy of Zedekiah, who had sworn to Nebuchadnezzar that he would be humble and weak and would not arm, and now is perpetually seeking chariots and soldiers from Egypt. For thus insulting Jehovah, who has given the power to Nebuchadnezzar, he shall be punished and carried to Babylon. His army shall be destroyed. The remnant of the nation shall be dispersed. Then Jehovah will gather together His dispersed people, and all Israel will be reunited in Jerusalem.

C. THE FALL OF JERUSALEM

2 KINGS xxv. ; 2 CHRON. xxxvi. 11 ; JER. xxi., xxxvii.-xli., lii. ;
EZEK. vii.

Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.

ZEDEKIAH'S REIGN—*continued*.

Revolt resolved upon.—Zedekiah has been described as “a bundle of inconsistencies.” He may perhaps be pardoned for wavering between this course and that, placed as he was between those who offered him as the Divine will a hopeless submission, and those who, with aspirations that seemed so patriotic, counselled resistance. And the men determined on fighting had an argument on their side in Egypt, which was rising under Hophra (*Apries*), a monarch of the twenty-sixth dynasty.

Tyre also, and the other Phœnician cities, declared against Babylon, and their envoys, together with emissaries from Edom, Moab, and Ammon, appeared in Jerusalem (Jer. xxvii. 3). The time, if ever it was to be, had come for breaking off the yoke ; and Zedekiah took the fatal step.

Ezekiel's Vision.—Ezekiel, by the Euphrates, heard of the intended movement, and denounced it as a breach of faith, not with Nebuchadnezzar only, but with Jehovah (Ezek. xvii. 19). He has left a vision (Ezek. xxi. 21), in which we see two roads starting from Babylon, with signposts on which a hand was engraved, showing that one led to Jerusalem, the other to Rabbath-Ammon. The king of Babylon stood at the junction of the two roads consulting the oracles, to see which he should take. Jerusalem fell to the first lot. The turn of Rabbath-Ammon would follow later.

Nebuchadnezzar marches on Jerusalem.—It was in B.C. 590 that Zedekiah rebelled, and Nebuchadnezzar's march began. He established his headquarters at Riblah, near the sources of the Orontes. Zidon surrendered without a struggle. Tyre resisted, and establishing a blockade of that city, the Babylonian king proceeded to attack Judah. Zedekiah shut himself up in Jerusalem, abandoning the provincial cities to the enemy.

They have blown the trumpet, and have made all ready ; but none goeth to the battle (Ezek. vii. 14).

The Siege of Jerusalem.—The siege of Jerusalem commenced. The city, defended on three sides by steep declivities, was open to attack only on the north. There the siege-towers were erected, and the lines of circumvallation traced out. During this time the excitement in the city was extreme.

The Party of Resistance.—Jerusalem under siege has always produced zealots, and Zedekiah's officers wished for war to the death. Jeremiah, assured of the fatal termination of the war, wished for instant surrender.

The King consults Jeremiah.—Zedekiah, according to his character, wavered even now. He sent a deputation to the prophet, begging him to inquire of God. *Peradventure the LORD will deal with us according to all His wondrous works, that he* (Nebuchadnezzar) *may go up from us* (Jer. xxi. 2). Jeremiah's reply did not give room for hope. No miracle could be wrought. Jehovah himself would fight on the side of Babylon. King and people would fall. No mercy would be shown.

Emancipation of Hebrew Slaves—Hope of Aid from Egypt.—And the siege continued. To increase the number of defenders, and to observe a law of Deuteronomy still disregarded, the king proclaimed the emancipation of all Hebrew slaves ; and for one moment it seemed as if this act of humanity had brought good fortune, for tidings came that an Egyptian army was at last approaching the frontier. Nebuchadnezzar hastily raised the siege of Tyre and Jerusalem, and marched to the south.

The Freed Men re-enslaved.—But it was only to return immediately. Egypt was not invaded, and we do not know whether a battle ever took place. It was but a moment of relief. And what had happened at Jerusalem during that moment ? The former owners of the liberated slaves, believing that the Chaldean army was retreating, claimed their property, and again reduced the unfortunate men to servitude. Jeremiah was justly exasperated, and once more announced the city's doom, and Nebuchadnezzar, resuming the siege, continued it without truce or mercy.

Jeremiah imprisoned.—But the prophet was suspected of *wishing* for the fatal event which he *foresaw*. He was noticed

one day in the vicinity of the gate of Benjamin, near which the enemy was encamped. It was asserted that he intended to desert to them. He was arrested, scourged, imprisoned, and half-starved.

But Zedekiah, though he would not believe him, secretly feared him, and on his complaint of the treatment he had received, removed him to a more comfortable prison in the royal palace. One loaf a day was assigned him from the baker's bazaar, and this ration was served out to him as long as bread was left in the city.

His Purchase of Land at Anathoth.—It was during this confinement that the prophet was advised by his cousin Hanameel to purchase the family property at Anathoth. With a noble confidence, which has often been compared to that of the Roman senator who bought the ground occupied by the camp of Hannibal, he complied, for he believed that after the misery of siege and captivity, peace and prosperity would be restored (Jer. xxxii. 6).

His Treatment by the Zealots.—But the zealots grew fiercer, and, in spite of the king, seized the prophet and lowered him into a muddy cistern. From this horrible situation he was, however, soon released by a eunuch of the palace, Ebed-melech, an Ethiopian (Jer. xxxviii. 7-14). This was with the assent of Zedekiah, who again consulted the man of God, promising that he should not be put to death, but could obtain but one answer, "Surrender, or you die." *If thou wilt go forth unto the king of Babylon's princes, then thy soul shall live, and this city shall not be burned with fire; . . . but if thou wilt not go forth to the king of Babylon's princes, then shall this city be given into the hands of the Chaldeans, and they shall burn it with fire, and thou shalt not escape out of their hand.*

Sortie and Capture of Zedekiah.—But the king still wavered, and the end drew nearer every hour. A breach was made in the wall, and the city could be no longer defended. There were present, too, all the horrors of famine. In the Lamentations (i. 19, ii. 11, 12, iv. 13, 14) we have an appalling picture of the misery of the city. There came a night when the zealots themselves despaired, and, dragging Zedekiah with them, they made a sortie, broke through the Chaldean army, and fled by the way of the Arabah. They were pursued and overtaken in the plains of Jericho. The king was taken to Riblah, and tried as a rebel

vassal. His sons were killed in his presence, and then his eyes were put out, and he was taken in fetters to Babylon. The siege had lasted about eighteen months.

Capture and Punishment of Jerusalem.—The Chaldeans entered Jerusalem, and for a month watched the cowed city, waiting for instructions. Then Nebuzaradan, captain of Nebuchadnezzar's guard, reached the city with orders to destroy it. He burned the Temple, the palace, all the well-built houses, and demolished the walls. Everything of value was carried off. The brazen work of the Temple and the columns were broken up and removed to Babylon. Not a vessel used in the sacred services escaped. *So Judah was carried away captive out of his land* (Jer. lii. 27). This was 587 B.C.

The Second Captivity.—The second deportation was necessarily smaller than that made eleven years before. Jeremiah numbers the persons carried away at eight hundred and thirty-two. Some representative men, the priests Seraiah and Zephaniah among them, were sent to Riblah to be cruelly put to death. In other respects the measures taken by the conqueror were merciful. The position of Judah was not so deplorable as that of Israel after the siege of Samaria. Foreign colonists were not introduced.

Gedaliah appointed Governor of Judah.—Provision was made for the government of the Hebrews who were left, and for the industries of the country. Gedaliah, the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan, a man of good birth and position, and with a character for moderation, was placed in charge, and the daughters of Zedekiah were committed to his care. He established the centre of his authority at Mizpah, near Jerusalem, where a great many well-intentioned persons rallied to him, and among them Jeremiah.

Temporary Tranquillity.—For a time it seemed as if the settlement might succeed in restoring order. There were willing hands to engage in husbandry, and nature herself did her best to efface the sad marks of invasion. The husbandmen *gathered wine and summer fruits very much* (Jer. xl. 12). Nor was there a want of spirit among the people. Their religion, degraded as no doubt it was, lent them courage and faith. They had lost the Temple, but they felt they still had the land promised to Abraham and his descendants. *Abraham was one,*

and he inherited the land: but we are many; the land is given us for inheritance (Ezek. xxxiii. 24).

Ishmael's Plot.—But there were prowling about guerilla bands, who did not want a settled government. With them brigandage was the order of the day. The most dangerous of them was Ishmael ben Nethaniah, who was of the royal race, and had been of Zedekiah's court. He had made a pact with Baalis, king of the Ammonites, and Gedaliah had only governed at Mizpah two months when this desperado contrived his murder.

Gedaliah murdered—Departure of the Judahites to Egypt.

—He came to Mizpah with ten men, and was hospitably entertained, though Gedaliah had been warned against treachery. He was a generous simple-minded man, and could not dream that the rights of hospitality would be no longer respected. He fell, and with him perished the last hope of the reconstitution of Jewish society upon its ancient foundations. *For all the people, both small and great* (Jeremiah among them), *and the captains of the forces, arose and came to Egypt, for they were afraid of the Chaldeans.*

On its ancient foundations? No, a great change must come. The captives, as Jeremiah prophesied, would return, and the Book of Chronicles ends with the decree of Cyrus, king of Persia, permitting the return, and the rebuilding of the Temple. But much was to be learned and much forgotten during the Exile. It was to be the gate of repentance—the start on a new way. Theology and religion had both to be purified. The lesson begun under the prophets of the eighth century that Jehovah, God of Israel, was not one Deity among many, but the *one Lord of the whole earth*, had to be completely learned. The new covenant preached by Jeremiah had to be subscribed and witnessed, a covenant not between a nation and its tutelary divinity, but between the individual soul and its Maker and Father. The fall of the house of David was necessary that the ideal prince of that house who should restore Israel might be a prince over the heart and conscience of mankind, and not a sovereign enthroned at Jerusalem. And it was only under crushing defeat, nay apparent ruin, and during a time of suffering and anguish, that the doctrine of a Messiah, who should be *despised and rejected of men*, could grow into shape, and men turn from the thought of a future golden age of

earthly good fortune to a heavenly hope and faith in an endless future.

And indeed to secure that hope and faith for the world, Jerusalem must fall once more. Between Hebraism and Christianity came Judaism. The one ended with the first Temple, the other with the second. With the Exile Old Testament History enters on a new stage.

CI. BABYLON

Thou river
That flowest exulting in thy proud approach
To Babylon, beneath whose shadowy walls,
And brazen gates, and gilded palaces,
And groves, that gleam with marble obelisks,
Thy azure bosom shall repose, with lights
Fretted and chequered like the starry heavens.

Rarely in the drama of history do the scenes shift with the suddenness and completeness of a stage change. But the Exile moves our attention altogether from Jerusalem and fixes it for the moment wholly on Babylon. Or if our glance wanders, it is not to the ruins of the Temple and the Holy City, but to Egypt, where the aged Jeremiah, still, it may be, attended by his faithful Baruch, was dragging out his last weary years in indignant but idle remonstrance against the heathen cults practised by his fellow-refugees.

Herodotus' Description of Babylon.—Of the vast and magnificent city, in which for a generation the fortunes of Israel and the religious hopes of the world were imprisoned, only a few weird and desolate mounds remain. But within one century from the time when the Israelites were within its walls it was visited and described by the inquisitive Herodotus (bk. i. 178–180), and if the accuracy of his figures has been disputed, yet the impression left by his description of the city has been abundantly confirmed by the examination of its site made by more recent travellers.

Walls and Dimensions of the City.—A vast square, intersected by the Euphrates as London is by the Thames, but more than double the size of London, each side having a length of

fifteen miles, enclosed by walls more than 370 feet high, that is, higher than the extreme height of St. Paul's, and so broad that between the buildings that lined them on both sides there was room for a four-horse chariot to turn ;—such is his measurement of a city, whose magnificence he declares to have been beyond that of any other city in the world. A hundred brazen gates gave entrance to the huge enclosure, where forests, parks, and gardens were intermingled with the houses, so as to present rather the appearance of the suburbs of a great metropolis than the metropolis itself. The streets all ran in straight lines, not only those parallel to the river, but also the cross streets leading to the water side, and at the river end of these were low gates, also of brass, in the fence skirting the stream. The houses were three or four storeys high.

The Great Palace.—City walls towering high were no novel sight to the Jews accustomed to the appearance of Jerusalem from the valley of Kidron, but the prodigious scale on which the public buildings of Babylon were planned, and the wealth of ornament lavished upon them, offered a spectacle for which even Solomon's Temple had not prepared them. The Great Palace of the Kings was itself a city within a city. It had a circuit of seven miles. Its gardens rose one above another to the height of more than 70 feet. Its walls within and without were gorgeous with painting and sculpture.

The Temple of Bel-Merodach.—But the most wonderful of all was the Temple of Bel-Merodach. It stood in a square enclosure with a side of 440 yards. In the middle rose a tower of solid masonry, built like a pyramid, square on square, the lowest having a side of 220 yards, the temple proper, a silver shrine, shining out over the vast level plains that surrounded it at a height of 600 feet. Though the materials of its architecture, as of that of all the city, were only brick and bitumen, these were made to yield effects as bright and as varied as those produced by porcelain or metal. The several stages of the temple were black, orange, crimson, gold, deep yellow, brilliant blue, and silver white.

Life in Babylon.—Life in this magnificent city corresponded to its magnificence. Scattered here and there amid the contemporary Hebrew writings, and floating down, no doubt with some exaggeration, in the traditions preserved by later writers, we come upon records of the impression produced on the

captive Jews by the scenes that met their eyes. We, too, can almost behold them. The chariots and horses, the captains, *all of them princes to look to* (Ezek. xxiii. 6, 12, 15; Jer. li. 3), with their brilliant blue or crimson uniforms, their variegated sashes, their elaborate armour—the magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the celebrated wise Chaldeans (Dan. ii. 2, iv. 6, 7), *the satraps, deputies, governors, judges, treasurers, counsellors, sheriffs, all the rulers of the provinces* (Dan. iii. 3), present even to us a gorgeous display of military and official splendour. The traffic on the rivers, that is, the many streams or canals leading to and from the Euphrates, and on the wide lake or sea into which it opened immediately below the city, reaches our ears (Isa. xliii. 14), unless it is drowned by the music of the bands in whose concerts the Babylonians delighted, and in which all the instruments known to the ancient world were represented (Dan. iii. 7).

Nebuchadnezzar.—Some of the exiles at all events were brought into immediate contact with the pomp and luxury of the brilliant court in which all the varied life of the city was focused, and which was presided over by the head of it all, the great Nebuchadnezzar, *the head of gold whose brightness was excellent* (Dan. ii. 31–38), *the Tree whose height reached to heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth* (Dan. iv. 11). “He whose reign reached over one-half the whole period of the empire; he who was the last conqueror amongst the primeval monarchs as Nimrod had been the first, the lord of the then known historical world,” the accepted favourite of Nebo as his name implies, and the most devoted servant of Bel-Merodach; he whose name and titles the bricks which modern curiosity day by day digs out of the ruins of his metropolis display almost to the exclusion of all others, he might truly say, “*Is not this great Babylon, which I have built for the royal dwelling-place, by the might of my power, and for the glory of my majesty?*” (Dan. iv. 30).

His character.—The inscriptions of Nebuchadnezzar that have been discovered relate, with one exception, to his buildings or to his acts of devotion towards the gods. In this he stands in marked contrast to the Assyrian kings. While they delighted to describe their campaigns and victories, his chief pleasure is to enumerate the temples he has built and restored,

or to utter prayers and praises to the gods of Babylon.¹ The representations of him in the Book of Daniel may belong to a later epoch, but they agree in their general outline with the picture he has left of himself. He is a gigantic oppressor, a fierce persecutor, but the savage power is combined with a certain magnanimity — he can command *the burning fiery furnace to be heated seven times more than it was wont to be heated* (Dan. iii. 19, 20, 28), but he can also exclaim with fervour, *Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego*. He can become insane with pride, but after his recovery he can *praise, and extol, and honour the King of heaven*, and even own that *all His works are truth and His ways judgment* (Dan. iv. 37).

CII. THE EXILE

2 KINGS xxv. 27-30; ISA. li. 17-23, lii. 5, lxiii. 28; JER. xxix., xxxiv., xxxix., 11-14, lii. 31-34; LAM. i.-v.; EZEK. xii. 10, 20, xvii. 12-24, xix. 8, 9, xxxiii. 21-33; VARIOUS PSALMS OR PARTS OF PSALMS —xiv., xlii.-xliv., li., liii., lxxvii., cii., cxiii., cxxxvii.; DAN. i.-iv.

By the rivers of Babylon,
 There we sat down; yea, we wept,
 When we remembered Zion.
 Upon the willows in the midst thereof
 We hanged up our harps.
 For there they that led us captive required of us songs,
 And they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying,
 Sing us one of the songs of Zion.
 How shall we sing Jehovah's song
 In a strange land?
 If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,
 Let my right hand forget her cunning.
 Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth
 If I remember thee not;
 If I prefer not Jerusalem
 Above my chief joy.

Chronology of the Captivity.—Into “the golden city of this magnificent oppressor” the little band of Israelites were transported for the period which is known by the name of the Babylonian Captivity. If the seventy years foretold by Jeremiah for its duration are to be taken literally, and not as a

¹ Sayce, *The Higher Criticism and the Monuments*, p. 454.

round number, this captivity must be reckoned from B.C. 606 to 536. But it really began in 587, and lasted about fifty years. This was a period long enough to sow the seeds of a change deeper than any that had occurred since the time of Samuel, perhaps even of the Exodus.

Fate of the Leading Exiles—Evidence of the Monuments.—If we judged only by the spirit displayed in the monuments Assyrian and Babylonian monarchs have left of their conquests, we should imagine the condition of the exiled Jews to have been that of slaves in abject misery, and subjected to the worst treatment. The bas-reliefs now in European museums show us, “with startling realism, the long files of captives, their arms bound behind their backs,—in a position which in itself must have caused torture,—walking bowed and humiliated beneath the whip, for the greater glory of their conqueror.”¹ It may have been in this posture that the leading men of Judah accomplished the eighty leagues of journey from Jerusalem to Riblah; and after seeing many of their number there put to death, the remainder were probably marched in the same cruel fashion across the desert of Palmyra to the confluence of the Euphrates and Chebar.

Fate of Jehoiachin—Evidence of Literature and Tradition.—And that great severity was practised after the deportation was accomplished, at least towards the princes and nobles, is clear not only from the fate of Jehoiachin, who languished in prison all the lifetime of Nebuchadnezzar, and, if tradition may be trusted, was then released by Evil-Merodach, not from motives of leniency, but because the two princes had shared a common prison and become friends, but also from notices in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, from the poetical creations of the time, and especially from the memories afterwards embodied in the Books of Lamentations and Daniel. The pictures of the Babylonian captivity which were before the mind of the author of the latter book, four centuries after, cannot be treated as historically correct in every detail. But the stories of the persecutions to which pious Israelites were exposed for their faith under a monarch so filled with religious zeal as Nebuchadnezzar must have had a foundation in fact.

Treatment of the Majority.—But apart from the fate of those who personally made themselves obnoxious to the

¹ Renan, *History of the People of Israel*, bk. vi. c. 1.

authorities, the material condition of the exiles does not appear to have been bad. There is no proof that a servitude like that of Egypt was repeated in Babylonia; no hint that the Jews were employed in the great architectural works of Nebuchadnezzar. Their occupations appear to have been rather agricultural. They were found in villages in the vicinity of Babylon (Ezra ii. 59), where no doubt they readily followed the advice of Jeremiah—to build houses, and plant gardens, and make comfortable homes for themselves (Jer. xxix. 5, 6, 7). Nor is it likely that the Jew, who everywhere adapts himself to circumstances where money is to be made, refrained from taking part in the immense and profitable commerce going on around him, unless indeed he looked on with a prophet's eye, and saw in all this successful traffic only a presage of the growing wrath of Jehovah, and the coming doom of Babylon.

That many of the exiles became rich, and, so far from being in a state of servitude, possessed slaves of their own, and even treated them very harshly, we know on the testimony of both Ezra and Ezekiel; and the fact that comparatively so few availed themselves of the opportunity that at last came of returning to their native land, proves that the bulk of those, who at first no doubt felt all the misery of exile, had not only reconciled themselves to it, but had come to regard the land of their captivity as their real home.

The Faithful Remnant.—But there were some who could not stifle their regrets. For the Levite, the disciple of the prophets, the pious and zealous servant of Jehovah, the captivity was *galúth*, a stripping bare, a bereavement—of country, of sanctuary, and, as it would look to other nations, of the favour of God. For these the minstrel spoke who sang the touching lament of Psalm cxxxvii., at the head of this Lesson. A few representatives of this remnant, on whom the preservation of the national faith, and therefore the religious destinies of the world depended, are known to us.

Ezekiel.—Foremost among them was Ezekiel. He was of the highest priestly family. His father's name, however, is all we know of it. He was one of the earliest of the captives deported in the reign of Jehoiachin. He lived in a house of his own on the Chebar. Up to the fall of Jerusalem he had kept up a close correspondence with the leading men of his country, especially with Jeremiah. And he had also acted the

part of a faithful shepherd to his fellow-exiles, warning them against idolatry and other sins, and exhorting them to take their misfortunes as a punishment for their own wrong-doings, and to return to the path of obedience and loyalty to their God. For there were some among the captives who adopted a fatalistic creed, putting their exile down solely to the fault of their fathers, and regarding an acceptance of the idol worship of Babylon as an inevitable result of life in the country. The prophet tried to extricate them from this error by preaching the doctrine of individual responsibility. At the same time, he did not shrink from representing judgment as a moral necessity, from which, however, the people might turn and not die. Some listened, but many were disposed to treat all the predictions of Ezekiel of greater trouble to come as mere parabolic figments. At last this reached such a pitch that he was commanded by Jehovah to cease expostulating for a while and be dumb. During this time he occupied himself in committing his prophecies to writing.

He prophesies the Return.—At last the news came of the overthrow of the Holy City, and the prophet's mouth was opened. And henceforth he became, till his death, a marvelous centre of hope to the exiled people. To say that he did not despair of a return and restoration of city, and Temple, and religion, would be a weak phrase. He had such a certainty of it that he could only give it expression in actual plans of what the restored buildings would be, and by such a precise and formal arrangement of all the details of ceremonial and worship that some of his chapters read like passages from Leviticus.

The "Second Isaiah."—If we know little of the person of Ezekiel, we know less of another prophet whose utterances, whenever written down, belong to the period of the Exile, or that which immediately followed it. They are contained in the last twenty-six chapters of the Book of Isaiah. This great writer has been called sometimes the "Second Isaiah," sometimes "The Great Unnamed," sometimes "The Evangelical Prophet." In his glorious roll of consolations, warnings, aspirations, we have, it has been by many said, the very highest flight of Hebrew prophecy.

Daniel.—The third great figure, at least as seen by Jewish patriots four hundred years later, towers high above the rest of the exiles. This is the prophet and sage Daniel, the type to

Ezekiel of piety and wisdom, to the author of the Book bearing his name, of sagacity, courage, and devotion to principle. The name, which occurs in 1 Chron. iii. 1, as belonging to the son of David called in 2 Sam. iii. 3, Chileab, means *My judge is God*, or *A judge is God*.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego.—He is said to have been taken to Babylon in the reign of Jehoiakim, together with three other youths—Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah—selected by Nebuchadnezzar's command, for their beauty and talents, to attend his court. Babylonian names were given them. Daniel became Belteshazzar, his companions Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego (or *Nebo*, i.e. *servant of Nebo*).

Other names, more historical, will emerge in the story of the Return. But it is these four who must always stand out before the world as martyrs or witnesses to the Faith, as they did to the inspired writer who sought to nerve the hearts of his fellow-countrymen under the Seleucid persecutions by these examples of heroic constancy and fortitude, of loyalty to the One True God, and of the power of prayer to sustain amid anguish and trial. The burning fiery furnace and the lions' den have passed into literature as synonyms for persecution, and those who endured them as types of all who, for conscience sake, are subjected to trial—

Amid innumerable false, unmoved,
Unshaken, unseduced, unterrified,
Their loyalty they kept, their faith, their love.

CHIII. THE FALL OF BABYLON

DAN. v. ; ISA. xiii., xiv., xxi. 1-10, xlv.-xlvii. ; JER. l., li.

Belshazzar's grave is made,
His kingdom passed away,
He, in the balance weighed,
Is light and worthless clay ;
The shroud his robe of state ;
His canopy the stone.
The Mede is at his gate,
The Persian on his throne.

Evil-Merodach, King of Babylon.—Nebuchadnezzar died about the year 560 B.C. As long as his iron rule lasted, only

the most far-seeing of prophets could discern a hope that the prison doors would be opened to the captives. But on the accession of his son, Evil-Merodach (Avil-Marduk), a prospect of relief became generally visible. The new monarch celebrated his accession by liberating Jehoiachin, and assigning him an honourable position among the princes of Babylon. Nor did Evil-Merodach display any of the commanding greatness of his father. He had neither care nor capacity for government, and was given over to pleasure. If only another power hostile to Babylon should show itself, the peoples so long and cruelly oppressed by her might hope. And this power was already rising.

The Medes and Persians.—The years of Babylon were indeed numbered. To the east of the Tigris the Aryan populations of Media and Persia were assuming importance. The eyes of the Hebrew seers had long been upon that quarter of the world as the home of a future deliverer. Already Ezekiel had been startled by the vision of wild nomads pouring over the hills that had hitherto parted them from their destined prey (Ezek. xxxii. 26). And now Jeremiah heard yet more distinctly the gathering of war—an assembly of great nations against Babylon from the north country, armed with the weapons that none could resist (Jer. l. 9).¹

Thus the power was preparing which was to crush Babylon, and the hour of its doom was approaching. And the very man had appeared who was to accomplish it.

Character and Policy of Cyrus.—This was Cyrus (Κῦρος; Hebrew, *Koresh*; Babylonian, *Kuras*; Persian, *Kurush*). He traced his descent to Achæmenes, the founder of the noblest family of the noblest tribe of Persia. But he makes his first appearance, in what is now regarded as authentic history, as king of Ansan, a district, it seems, in the territory of Elam, which originally separated Babylonia from Persia. His great-grandfather, Teispes, had seated himself upon that throne. A halo of romance encircles his youth, but we may well believe that he early gave promise of those qualities of mind and heart which were justly to win for him the title of *Great*. He was a born king, and a born soldier; but in addition to the qualities which fitted him so well for the career of conqueror, he had a wise and settled policy, to which he brought a deep sagacity. His was not the brutal lust of empire of the

¹ Stanley, *Jewish Church*, Lect. XLII. vol. iii. 50.

Assyrian or Babylonian. He has been called the Charlemagne of the East. Under Nebuchadnezzar a conquered nation or tribe, after seeing all its noblest go into exile, might gain a show of independence by punctual payment of tribute. The policy of Cyrus was to make his dependencies strong rather than weak, and to win their loyalty by respect for their customs and their institutions. Scarcely had he begun his series of brilliant conquests when the nations oppressed under the leaden weight of Babylonish despotism began to breathe more freely, seeing deliverance on the horizon.

The Expected Deliverer.—And of all the nations the most expectant was Israel. The gaze of the seer was fixed on Cyrus, and with no uncertain sound the greatest prophetic voice of the time hailed him by name as an anointed prince, a promised Messiah, the expected deliverer alike of the Chosen People and of all surrounding nations (Isa. xlv. 28, xlv. 1).

His Religious Attitude.—Till recently it has been concluded that a Persian king must have been in close sympathy with the Hebrews in acknowledging the unity of the Godhead, and in abhorrence of idolatry. This is now rendered doubtful of Cyrus, for just as he allowed a decree to go forth in Persian, *All the kingdoms of the earth hath Jehovah God of heaven given me* (2 Chron. xxxvi. 23; Ezra i. 1–2), so he allowed the Babylonian scribes to represent him as the avowed and devoted servant of Bel-Merodach and Nebo. In his heart he may no doubt have had monotheistic leanings, though even Darius, who was so sincere a worshipper of Ormazd (also written *Ormuzd*, *Ahurmazd*, corrupted from *Ahurs-Mazdao*), says twice over in the Behistun Inscription, “Ormazd brought help to me, and the other gods that are.” But it cannot be now doubted that Cyrus allowed policy to regulate his acts and words far more than religion.

The Successors of Evil-Merodach.—Evil-Merodach was deposed in the second year of his reign by his nephew, Neriglissar (Nirgal-sar-usur), a man of vigour and ability, but unable to resist the impetuous march of Cyrus, though supported by hosts of Lydian and other allies. He died after a reign of four years, and his son and successor, Laborosoarchod, was assassinated within a year of his accession. The Babylonian throne now went to Nabonidus (Nabu-nahid), who had no connection with the house of Nebuchadnezzar. He became king about 555 B.C.,

and being a man of some energy, maintained the sovereignty with varying success for seventeen years. But Babylon's days were numbered.

Accounts of the Fall of Babylon.—Three accounts of her fall have come down to us: that told by classical writers, the biblical account in the Book of Daniel, and that contained in various cuneiform texts.

Herodotus' Narrative.—Herodotus tells us (bk. i. 190, 191), that after a difficult march Cyrus attacked the Babylonians, encamped outside their walls, and defeated them. They then withdrew into the city and shut themselves up, making light of a siege, because of the store of provisions made in preparation of this attack. Cyrus, finding it impossible to storm the place, and despairing of a blockade, had recourse to stratagem. He placed a portion of his army at the point where the river enters the city, and another where it issues forth, with orders to both to march into the town by the bed of the stream as soon as the water became shallow enough. He then rendered the Euphrates fordable by turning its waters into trenches and canals. The inhabitants in their careless security had not fastened the river gates, and the Persian army invaded the city and took it by surprise. Indeed, long after the outer portions were taken, the inhabitants of the central parts, engaged in a festival, knew nothing of what had happened. Herodotus calls the reigning king at this time, Labynetus, and says nothing of his fate. Other writers name him Nabonidus, and by one he is represented as being killed in the night attack on his capital, by another as dying at Borsippa, whither he had fled after his defeat outside the walls.

Narrative of the Babylonian Inscriptions.—The Babylonian texts that have been deciphered give a different account. Cyrus had a strong party in his favour in Babylon, for Nabonidus had alienated the priestly caste by attempted religious changes and by his neglect of certain festivals. They had turned to the Persian monarch, the man before whom nation after nation had fallen, as the protector of the honour of Bel-Merodach, Nebo, and other deities. Accordingly, after his defeat of the army of Nabonidus in Accad or Northern Babylonia, they opened the gates to the victor, who marched in without fighting. This was in 538 B.C. Nabonidus was captured, and died within a year.

We learn from the same source that Nabonidus had a son called Bilusarra-utsur (in a Hebrew form, Belshazzar), who acted as his father's general in Accad, but about whose movements at the time of the taking of Babylon nothing definite has come to light.

The Narrative of the Book of Daniel.—In the Book of Daniel it is a king Belshazzar, a *son of Nebuchadnezzar*, who is on the throne of Babylon when Cyrus is at its gates. It is the time of a high festival. All is revelry, the proverbial splendour and intoxication of the Babylonian feasts. The king himself sits with a thousand of his lords, his wives, and concubines in the lighted hall, and to honour his own gods he insults Jehovah, the God of Israel, by profaning the sacred vessels brought from Jerusalem. *In the same hour came forth the fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king's palace; and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote.* Terror seizes the monarch. The soothsayers and wise men are summoned, but none can interpret the mysterious writing. Then the queen enters, and reminds the king of Daniel and his skill as an interpreter. "And then, like Elijah before Ahab, like Tiresias before Creon in the Grecian drama, is brought in the hoary seer, with his accumulated weight of years and honours, to warn the terror-stricken king, and to read the decree of fate which none else could interpret."¹ *This is the writing that was transcribed, Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin. And this is the interpretation of the thing: Mene—God hath numbered thy kingdom, and brought it to an end. Tekel—thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. Peres—thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians. . . . In that night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain.*

The Israelites and the Fall of Babylon.—However history shall eventually decide between these different accounts, or reconcile them, the effect produced on Israel is unmistakable. *Great Babylon is fallen, is fallen.* That was the cry that passed from mouth to mouth through the whole Jewish community. *The hammer of the whole earth was cut asunder and broken.* A new era of hope and promise had begun.

It is true that the terrible predictions of the prophets were only half fulfilled. It is possible that they had a forward

¹ Stanley, *Jewish Church*, Lect. XLII. vol. iii. 57.

reference to the later captures of Babylon, first by Darius Hystaspis, and then by Xerxes, when the pictures of woe and horror beheld in the lurid visions of Jeremiah and the great Unnamed Prophet became actual fact. That, perhaps, was the crash whose thunder reverberates through their words. Jeremiah had cried, *How is Babylon become a desolation among the nations! The wild beasts of the desert with the wolves shall dwell there, and the ostriches shall dwell therein; and it shall be no more inhabited for ever* (Jer. l. 23-39). And the wide and bare desert track, interrupted only by shapeless mounds and broken canals, impresses the modern traveller as a visible testimony of the truth of prophecy, and the lion and the jackal now prowl where once stood the palace of Nebuchadnezzar. But for two centuries, even after the overthrow of the great city by Xerxes, it continued to be a flourishing place. Still its capture by Cyrus brought to Israel the accomplishment of her hopes and anticipations, for the hour of oppression was over, and, what was more, the danger to her religion had passed. *Bel had bowed down, and Nebo stooped* (Isa. xlvi. 1), and judgment had been done on the gods in Babylon, if not before the hand that would destroy their temples, yet before one who could make them *bring forth that which they had swallowed up* (Jer. li. 44); and for the Hebrew community idolatry, if the idols were not yet shattered, was at an end.

CIV. THE RETURN

2 CHRON. xxxvi. 22; EZRA i., ii.; NEH. vii.; ISA. xl.-lxvi.; PSALMS xevi.-c., cxx.-cxxxii.

The voice of one that crieth,
Prepare ye in the wilderness the way of Jehovah,
Make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

The decisive point was the change that took place in all the politics of the East.¹ The Chaldean supremacy had represented to the pious Israelite the reign of idolatry, force, and wrong. It was, moreover, an iron rule which never loosed one of its

¹ Renan, *History of the People of Israel*, bk. vi. ch. viii.

prisoners. But Jehovah had gained His victory, and Cyrus, His servant, would open the prison door.

Tolerant Policy of Cyrus.—But as for Cyrus himself, his treatment of the Hebrew exiles appears to have been only part of a general policy. In his inscription he expressly declares that he had collected all the peoples that had been dispossessed of their habitations, and restored them. *Also the gods who dwelt within them he restored to their places.* It would be interesting if we had the decrees permitting these restorations, as we have those giving permission to the Hebrews to return home.

The Decree for the Return.—*Now, in the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia, that the word of Jehovah by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, Jehovah stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus, king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath Jehovah, the God of heaven, given me; and He hath charged me to build Him an house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whosoever there is among you of all His people, Jehovah his God be with him, and let him go up.*

This is the form of the decree with which the Book of Chronicles ends. It is repeated with additions at the beginning of the Book of Ezra.

Attitude of the Exiles.—There responded to the invitation only part of the exiled nation. Those belonging to the old northern kingdom, whose families had been transplanted by Assyrian conquerors, never returned, or only in trifling numbers. And of the Judahites many of the settlers in Babylonia, or of those who had attained to office at court, Daniel apparently among them, preferred to remain. Ezekiel was probably dead, murdered, says one tradition, by a Babylonian, for rebuking him for idolatry, or he would certainly have been at the head of the joyful band who went with songs from the land of their captivity.

Zerubbabel.—Among these were some of the highest and lowest of the foreign settlement. We can discern the chief elements which constituted the seed of the rising community. The whole caravan consisted of forty-two thousand three hundred and sixty. Besides, there were seven thousand three hundred and thirty-seven slaves, two hundred of whom were

minstrels, male and female. Twelve chiefs, as if in reminiscence of the twelve tribes, were marked out as leaders. Amongst these was the acknowledged head of the community, the Prince of Judah, Zerubbabel, the grandson, real or adopted, of Jehoia-chin, last direct heir of David and Josiah. The name Zerubbabel is said to be Babylonian (Ziri-Babil, *seed of Babel*), as also is the alternative name by which the same prince is called, Sheshbazzar, (Samas-bil-utsur, *O Sun-god, defend the Lord*). His commission from Cyrus, as well as his official rank, was marked by the titles *Tirshatha* and *Pekhat*, words borrowed from Assyrian by the Persian monarchs to designate provincial governors. The latter still survives as *Pasha*.

Other Leaders of the Return.—Next to Zerubbabel, and at the head of a large body of priests and Levites, was Jeshua, or Joshua, the High Priest, and next him in importance Seraiah, or Azariah. There was also a Nehemiah, not, of course, the man who was later on to play such an important part in the rebuilding of the Holy City. The prophetic body was probably represented by Haggai and Zechariah. It is certainly strange not to find their names in the register which Nehemiah tells us he found *of them which came up at the first*, and which also appears in the Book of Ezra. This register, and the fact also that we are told the number of horses, mules, and camels provided for the journey, shows the care with which all the preparations were made.

Only Hebrews admitted to the Return.—This is still further shown by the record of the rigid scrutiny that was made to exclude from the return those who could not prove their Hebrew descent. Such was a body of unknown applicants from the villages in the marshes near the Persian Gulf. Such was another band, claiming to be of priestly origin, and vainly trying to justify their pretensions, by tracing their descent back to Barzillai the Gileadite. *And the Tirshatha said unto them that they should not eat of the most holy things till there stood up a priest with Urim and with Thummim*, i.e. never, as these oracular instruments had disappeared.

Such careful preparations would naturally take considerable time, and two years appear to have elapsed since the publication of the royal decree and the homeward start, which may be dated B.C. 536 or 535.

Restoration of the Sacred Vessels.—To the other tribes

whom he restored to their homes Cyrus granted permission to carry back their gods, like Æneas from burning Troy. He was equally careful of the religious susceptibilities of the Jews, allowing them to recover from the Babylonian treasury the sacred vessels which had been carried away by Nebuchadnezzar. Each article of plate was carefully named in lists, the thousand cups of original gold, the thousand cups of silver, with all the lesser vessels, even the nine and twenty knives being mentioned, amounting in all to five thousand four hundred.

The Departure from Babylon.—These material links with their religious past were probably borne in front of the procession, as once the ark had been carried before the tribes on the march. If we may credit a somewhat confused account in the Apocryphal book, 1 Esdras, a band of musicians and singers struck up a triumphal march as the caravan left the shade of the gigantic walls of Babylon for their four months' journey across the desert that separated them from Palestine. And doubtless the "New Song" which now takes its place in Hebrew Psalmody rose in glad strains from every heart and every lip. The burden of it was that Jehovah again reigned over the whole earth; that the gigantic idolatries of the heathen had received a deadly shock; that the waters of oppression had rolled back, in which they had been struggling like drowning men; that the snare was broken in which they had been entangled like a caged bird.

Purification of Hebrew Theology.—And well might they sing. Not only were they free and going home, but they were in many senses a changed, a new people. That for which Jeremiah and Ezekiel had prayed and suffered was in a great measure accomplished. Affliction had done its work. The danger of polytheism was for the restored Israel gone. Acquaintance with Babylonian superstition had completed the reaction against idolatrous tendencies which the prophets had begun. The captivity was accepted as a punishment for the frequent lapses from loyalty to Jehovah, the return as a restoration to His favour.

And not only had theology become purer, it had also become larger and nobler. Israel recognised now that their God was not theirs alone, but in reality and truth the God of the whole earth, while as for the gods of the heathen they were naught.

Attitude towards Religious Observances.—In regard to

religious observances the Exile appears to have produced two results of opposite tendencies. On the one hand there was the passionate desire to rebuild the Temple, which had its origin in the feeling that religion could not exist without a central sacred building, and combined with this a deep solicitude for the complete ascendancy of written law and of a strict and minute regulation of ceremonial worship, in which lay seeds of future mischief. On the other hand the want of the Temple during the Exile, and the cessation of sacrifice, had undoubtedly deepened and extended the sense that Jehovah might be approached and found everywhere, even by the side of a Babylonian stream, or in an ordinary house. Possibly the Synagogue ought to be dated from this period. And certainly that idea of personal relation to God, which Jeremiah and Ezekiel had taught to be both possible and necessary, had made private prayer more general. Religion, in fact, became more spiritual just when it was about to become intensely ceremonial and formal. At its birth-hour Judaism showed that it carried in itself the germ of Christianity.

This was indeed a critical hour, the hour which determined life or death. If the restoration had not taken place, Judah would have shared the fate of Israel, it would have blended with the East. Christianity would not have been possible. The Hebrew Scriptures would have been lost. The small troop, therefore, which crossed the desert carried the future with it, and definitely founded the religion of humanity. Well might the gifted seer sing—

*How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that
bringeth good tidings,*

That publisheth peace ; that bringeth good tidings of good,

*That publisheth salvation ; that saith unto Zion, Thy God
reigneth !*

*The voice of thy watchmen ! they lift up the voice, together do
they sing ;*

For they shall see, eye to eye, when Jehovah returneth to Zion.

Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem :

*For Jehovah hath comforted His people, He hath redeemed
Jerusalem.*

*Jehovah hath made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the
nations ;*

And all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

CV. THE NEW TEMPLE AND NEW WALLS

EZRA vi. ; NEH. i.-vi.

And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places : thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations ; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in.

The State of Palestine.—Anxieties as to what they might find there must have mingled with the joy of the returning exiles as they slowly wended their way home. Monarchy, priesthood, art, and commerce had departed ; what there was of culture and religion they were bringing back. But a large population had been left, partly of the aboriginal tribes, partly of the humbler classes of Israel. Palestine, as a whole, was controlled by Persian satraps. The Cutheans, or Samaritans, occupied the central portion. There was no inducement to settle the north. The Philistines on the sea-coast now asserting their independence, and Edom on the south, were certain to be hostile. Most of those returning appear to have been men of Jerusalem and the hill country immediately around it. In Gibeon, Ramah, Bethel, Bethlehem, Jericho, we find them settling. Some even crept as far south as Hebron and Beersheba.

The "Holy City."—But all the life of the restored nation was to concentrate at Jerusalem, now for the first time called by the name never since lost, "The Holy City," as the country becomes "The Holy Land."

A new Altar erected.—Zerubbabel's first step was to erect a new altar for the daily sacrifice in the place where the old had stood. This was consecrated at the Feast of Tabernacles, on the first day of the seventh month, now known by its Chaldean name of Tisri.

Foundation of the Second Temple.—A year after the foundation-stone of the second Temple was laid, for which contributions of money and materials had been flowing in. By the munificence of Zerubbabel, the priests, arrayed in rich dresses, once more blew their silver trumpets, while the sons of Asaph clashed their brazen cymbals ; and once more the national anthem rang out, *O give thanks unto Jehovah, for He is good, and His mercy endureth for ever.* But to some aged men

present, who remembered the splendour of Solomon's Temple, the scanty beginnings of the new made a melancholy contrast.

The Samaritans rebuffed.—There were other reasons for grief besides regret for the impossible splendours of the past. The old feud between north and south now broke out in a new form, which it was to retain through the rest of Jewish history. The Samaritans, of mixed Israelite and foreign origin, claimed a right to share in the work of rebuilding the Temple. Unfortunately they were met by that exclusiveness which became a characteristic of Judaism. *Let us build with you, for we seek your God as ye do*, the Samaritans had asked. *But Zerubbabel, and Joshua, and the rest of the heads of the fathers' houses of Israel, said unto them, Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto Jehovah the God of Israel, as king Cyrus the king of Persia hath commanded us.*

The Work checked—The Successors of Cyrus.—Intolerance as usual begat intolerance, and by a representation through paid agents at the court, the malcontents succeeded in obtaining a decree forbidding the work to proceed. Twelve precious years were wasted in meeting the mutual recriminations, during which time two princes, Cambyses and Pseudo-Smerdis, mounted the Persian throne. The leaders at Jerusalem fell into a kind of lethargy, and instead of pushing on the Temple buildings, spent the time and money in erecting fine mansions for themselves.

Completion of the Temple.—At last the revolution which raised Darius, son of Hystaspes, to the throne gave an opportunity, which the energetic remonstrances of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah compelled the leaders to seize. A favourable answer was received by the deputation that waited on Darius, and after six years the second Temple was dedicated, B.C. 516.

Its Form and Character.—Little is known of this edifice. If the measurements indicated in the decree of Cyrus (Ezra vi. 3) were adopted, it surpassed Solomon's Temple both in extent and height. But in general appearance it must have been inferior. "The Holy of Holies was empty. The ark, the cherubs, the tables of stone, the vase of manna, the rod of Aaron were gone. The golden shields had vanished."¹ Of

¹ Stanley, *Jewish Church*, Lect. XI.III. vol. iii. 105.

elaborate decoration there was perhaps none. Still there were rich features. The doors, for instance, were of gold.

There was one significant point of difference between the new and the old. The court of the worshippers was henceforth divided into two compartments, the outer being known as the Court of the Gentiles, or Heathen.

Development of the Jewish Community, B.C. 516-459.—

A blank in Palestinian history of more than half a century succeeds the dedication of the second Temple. Zerubbabel passed away, and with him all hope of a restoration of monarchy. The chief authority passed instead into the hands of the High Priest—subject, however, to the control of the Persian satrap, native or foreigner, for the time being (Neh. v. 14, 15).

Jerusalem had become in some degree a centre of trade, but either from the continued jealousy of rival neighbours, or from internal weakness and lethargy, its walls had never been rebuilt, and the city was insecure. Many moral disorders also disfigured the rising community.

Ezra — The Office of the Scribes.—The arrival of two remarkable men from the Jewish settlement in Persia was the signal for an important change. The first of these was Ezra the scribe. The scribes (or *sôpherim*) had in some form long existed. Registrars or clerks, then royal secretaries, then amanuenses of the prophets, like Baruch, then copyists of, and annotators on, the legal books—such were the stages that mark the growth of this office. Fired with a passion to enforce “The Law” on his countrymen in Palestine, Ezra obtained from Artaxerxes Longimanus, a charge to provide for the due execution of the national code, and for the proper adornment of the national sanctuary.

Ezra's Mission, B.C. 458.—A brief summary of the reception of gifts and offerings is all the record left of the latter commission (Ezra viii. 33, 34). The Scribe threw his whole energies into the other and chief purpose for which he had come, to exact strict obedience to law. Marriage with foreigners had become common, and a representation of the state of things was made to Ezra. It filled him with shame and grief. *And when I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down astonished. Then were assembled unto me everyone that trembled*

at the words of the God of Israel, because of the trespass of them of the captivity; and I sat astonished until the evening oblation. And at the evening oblation I arose up from my humiliation, even with my garment and my mantle rent; and I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto the LORD my God; and I said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift my face to Thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our guiltiness is grown up unto the heavens.

Foreign Marriages annulled.—His passion was catching, and a crowd soon surrounded him, headed by Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, who besought him to take the matter into his hands; and at a general assembly which he convoked, a commission was appointed to investigate every case of unlawful marriage, and compel separation. More than fifty families, including four of the priestly caste, were broken up by this drastic proceeding, in which a seeming legal necessity was made to override the more sacred claims of natural affection. In some cases, however, these claims had already been violated by those who had divorced their Jewish wives in order to marry foreigners. Against these Malachi, the prophet whose utterances close the Old Testament Canon, and who stood by Ezra and Nehemiah as Haggai and Zechariah had stood by Zerubbabel, lifts up his voice in indignant protest, *Judah hath dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and Jerusalem; for Judah hath profaned the holiness of the LORD which He loveth, and hath married a daughter of a strange god.* And he gives a pathetic picture of the discarded wives appealing to Jehovah at His altar, and covering it with their tears.

Nehemiah, B.C. 445.—The second arrival was that of Nehemiah, one of the most engaging personalities, as he has been called, in the Old Testament, a man of transparent sincerity, prompt to decide and resolute to act. He was cupbearer to the Persian king, and thus had access to his person. He tells his own pathetic story. *Now it came to pass in the month Chisleu, in the twentieth year (i.e. of Artaxerxes Longimanus), as I was in Shushan the palace, that Hanani, one of my brethren, came, he and certain men out of Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem. And they said unto me, The remnant that are left*

of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire. And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and I fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven.

His Commission and Arrival at Jerusalem.—For four months he grieved over this sad account of the *place of his fathers' sepulchres*, and grew wan with sorrow, till the king noticed his mournful aspect and asked the cause. His request to go to Jerusalem was granted, and he set off under escort and with authority, to accomplish the desire he had formed to restore the broken walls of the Holy City. His arrival with his "firman," his royal guard, and his retinue of slaves, produced a great sensation both at Jerusalem and among its jealous and suspicious neighbours.

The Restoration of the Walls.—Official business no doubt occupied the first three days. Then, accompanied by a few followers, Nehemiah made the circuit of the old walls to see for himself what was required. After making his observations he revealed his plan, and set every available man to work, the various corporations — apothecaries, goldsmiths, merchants — having to undertake what was too much for individuals. Even priests had their allotted portion.

Opposition of the neighbouring Tribes.—It was a severe toil in itself, and was impeded by the alternate threats and artifices of hostile tribes such as had entirely thwarted the abortive effort at fortification made by Ezra (Ezra iv. 12). The workmen had to labour with arms in their hands. But Nehemiah's energy of purpose and his consummate tact triumphed over everything, and in fifty-two days (Neh. vi. 15) the work was accomplished, and Jerusalem was once more a strong fortress.

Dedication of the new Walls.—The dedication day of the new walls was a day of great rejoicing. *It was kept with gladness, both with thanksgivings, and with singing, with cymbals, psalteries, and with harps. . . . Also on that day they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced: for God had made them rejoice with great joy: the wives also and the children rejoiced; so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off.*

CVI. THE LAW

NEH. viii., xiii. ; Ps. xix., cxix.

The law of Jehovah is perfect, restoring the soul :
 The testimony of Jehovah is sure, making wise the simple.
 The precepts of Jehovah are right, rejoicing the heart :
 The commandment of Jehovah is pure, enlightening the eyes.
 The fear of Jehovah is clean, enduring for ever ;
 The judgments of Jehovah are true, and righteous altogether.

The Leaders of the Opposition.—"Nehemiah's collision with the surrounding tribes still continued. They had contested inch by inch his great enterprise of making Jerusalem a fortified capital."¹ There were three men who made themselves conspicuous by their unrelenting opposition. One of these, a man who had been a slave, Tobiah the Ammonite, had at first treated Nehemiah's project with mere contempt. *Even that which they build, he said, if a fox go up, he shall break down their stone wall.* Geshem the Arabian, and Sanballat, from his official position at Samaria the most violent and powerful of the three, joined in this derision, but did not stop there. A report was spread that Nehemiah intended to establish an independent sovereignty at Jerusalem, or the hostile party pretended to have heard such a report, and represented the danger of the Jews should it reach the King of Persia. Sanballat and his associates proposed a conference. Nehemiah would listen to no suggestions of a meeting, seeing mischief in the proposal ; and the schemes of the triumvirate fell through.

Nehemiah's Wish for posthumous Fame.—There is a pathetic cry again and again repeated in Nehemiah's account of his work, which is hardly found elsewhere in the Hebrew records. He was fearful lest the memory of his labours might pass away and leave posterity ungrateful for what he had effected. *Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and wipe not out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for the observances thereof. . . . Remember unto me, O my God, this also, and spare me according unto the greatness of Thy mercy. . . . Remember me, O my God.*

Its Fulfilment.—This prayer for posthumous fame was

¹ Stanley, *Jewish Church*, Lect. XLIV. vol. iii. 132.

fulfilled in the case of Nehemiah. It was he and not Zerubabel who in after times was believed to have rebuilt the Temple (2 Macc. i. 18). By the son of Sirach he was recognised as *among the elect, whose renown was great*.

Traditional Renown of Ezra.—But it was still more remarkably fulfilled in the case of Ezra. He was placed on a level with Moses the first and Elijah the grandest of the prophets. He was identified with Malachi the last of the prophetic order. He was supposed by a Divine inspiration of memory to have reproduced the whole of the Scriptures of the Old Testament which had been burnt by the Chaldeans. A less fantastic tradition represents him as collector or editor of the sacred books, and refers the first Canon of Scripture to him.

There is no authentic evidence for this. But Ezra no doubt brought from Babylonia a copy of the Torah, or Law, and published it to the people.

The Reading of the Law.—It was the first day of the seventh month. *And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the broad place that was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which Jehovah had commanded unto Israel. And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation, both men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month. And he read therein before the broad place that was before the water gate from early morning until mid-day, in the presence of men and women, and of those that could understand: and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law. And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose* (Neh. viii. 1-4).

Newborn Reverence for the Law.—We feel that in this scene a new element of religion, or an old element with new distinctness and vitality, has entered on the stage. "The Temple has retired for the moment into the background. There is something which stirs the national sentiment yet more deeply, and which is the object of still more profound veneration. It is 'The Law.'"

And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people (for he was above all the people); and, when he opened it, all the people stood up: and Ezra blessed Jehovah, the great God; and all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with the lifting up

of their hands ; and they bowed their heads, and worshipped Jehovah with their faces to the ground.

Like everything, even of Divine origin, that was to pass through human channels and be presented in human ordinances, this new departure had its dark as well as its bright side.

Tendency to Formalism.—Its darker aspect comes out in the excessive formalism, against which prophet after prophet had already expostulated, and which, now that the prophetic voices were silenced for nearly five hundred years, could assert itself almost unchecked by any controlling influence. In the importance which scribes and Pharisees—themselves a direct product of the Law—attached to the punctilious discharge of every minute ceremony, all the spirituality and freedom of the old Hebrew religion seemed at times to be entirely lost. Just as the names Israelite and Hebrew had given way to Judæan or Jew, so the ancient faith of patriarch, and prophet, and psalmist degenerated into Judaism—narrow, exclusive, intolerant, lifeless, a religion of the letter not of the spirit. St. Paul at times, instead of regarding it as the main support of goodness, wrote of it as its worst and deadliest enemy.

The Law a necessary Discipline.—But the same apostle also said of the Law that it had been *a tutor to bring unto Christ*. In God's providence this stage was also necessary for the fulfilment of His purpose in Israel, to give a true religion to the world. Even at this very time, in the anticipations of the evangelical prophet, He to whom the nation had looked as its future Deliverer, the anointed King, the Messiah, was no longer a successful conqueror, but a suffering servant of Jehovah, One who should win salvation for His people by obedience even to death. In the brighter side which the devotion to Law turns to us, we see it maintaining this grand virtue of obedience, extolling the majesty of the unchanging law of right, and so in its own way adding one more link to the long chain of providential preparation for the coming of the world's Saviour, to which all the history of the chosen people was a Divine prologue.

APPENDIX I

HEBREW LEGISLATION

LEGISLATIVE enactments occupy a great part of Exodus and Numbers, and constitute nearly the whole of Leviticus and Deuteronomy. They are not, however, presented in regular sections,—civil, political, judicial,—but it is possible to pick out certain groups which apparently at one time formed separate codes, and three of these contain regulations for every department of life. We may conveniently give these the name *ethical* law, reserving that of *religious* law for what is distinctively ceremonial legislation. But, in fact, all Hebrew enactments have a religious character. Israel's law is the law of Jehovah. He is at once the source of it, and the administrator of it; and, when appeal is necessary from those through whom He acts, the appeal is directly to Him.

The following codes may be distinguished:—

A. CODES CONTAINING BOTH ETHICAL AND RELIGIOUS LAWS.

1. Ex. xx. 1-17.—The DECALOGUE, or The TEN WORDS (Ex. xxxiv. 28, margin), the original name of this short code. The term "Commandments" came into use later (Luke xviii. 20). This proclamation of a Hebrew's duty towards God and man has asserted its Divine origin by its permanence and universality. In its spirit, as Jesus Christ taught, it covers all human conduct. Even His new commandment, "Love one another," is, as He shows, implied in it. The "Ten Words" of Jehovah are suitable for every nation, and will endure for all time.

2. Ex. xx. 22-xxiii. 33.—The BOOK OF THE COVENANT (so named Ex. xxiv. 7), with which The JUDGMENTS (Ex. xxi.-xxii. 28) have been incorporated; a short code, humane and just

and simple, as for a people living under simple conditions of society and chiefly occupied in agriculture. It is introduced by a prohibition of graven images and regulations for the construction of altars, and contains—

- a. Civil enactments, as regulations about Hebrew slaves (xxi. 2–11), injuries to life and limb (xxi. 18–21), deposits and loans (xxii. 7–15).
- b. Criminal law as to capital offences (xxi. 12–17), danger caused by culpable negligence or theft (xxi. 33, xxii. 6).
- c. Miscellaneous, religious, and ethical injunctions ; as, regard for an *enemy's* property (xxiii. 4, 5) ; the duty of veracity and equity in the administration of justice (xxiii. 1–3, 6–9) ; regulations in regard to the Sabbatical year, the Sabbath, the three annual pilgrimages, and sacrifice (xxiii. 10–19).

3. Deut. v.–xxviii.—Complete code of laws, ethical, social, judicial, and religious, mostly appearing in the other codes (already noticed), but interspersed with some enactments peculiar to this edition of the Torah. Such are the laws relating to monarchy (xvii. 14–20), prophecy (xviii. 9–22), landmarks (xix. 14), military service (xx., comp. xxiv. 5), the undiscovered murderer (xxi. 1–9), female captives (xxi. 10–14), primogeniture (xxi. 15–17), bird-nesting (xxii. 6–7), humanity to escaped slaves (xxiii. 15–16), consideration for the ox while threshing (xxv. 4), immunity of a criminal's family and the law of the levirate (xxv. 5–10).

4. Lev. xvii.–xxvi.—The LAW OF HOLINESS, a code of ethical and religious ordinances, precepts of life for a holy people (xix. 2, xx. 7).

B. CODES OF RELIGIOUS LAWS.

1. Ex. xxxiv. 12–26.—A brief code containing the most important religious laws of the Book of the Covenant.

2. The sacerdotal code—

- a. Ex. xxv.–xxxi.—Sacerdotal legislation regarding the ark, the tabernacle, priestly dress and functions.
- b. Lev. i.–xvi.—Laws of sacrifice, purification, and atonement.
- c. Lev. xxvii.—Regulations as to the commutation of vows and tithes, and the jubilee year.

- d. Num. iii.-vi.—Various religious ordinances; Levitical regulations (iii. iv., comp. viii. 5-26); regulations as to the leprous and unclean (v. 1-4); offerings, heave and dedicatory (v. 5-10); ordeal for wives suspected of unfaithfulness (v. 11-30); Nazirites (vi. 2, 1-21).
- e. Num. xviii.—Priests and Levites, their relative position, duties, and revenues.
- f. Num. xxviii.-xxxi.—Various religious enactments; burnt, meat, and drink offerings, for morning and evening, the Sabbath, the New Moons, the Three Great Feasts, and the Day of Atonement (compare the sketch of ordinances for the restored theocracy, Ezek. xl.-xlviii.).

Deuteronomy has been described as a manual, which, without entering into technical details (with exception of xiv. 3-20, clean and unclean meats), would instruct the Israelites in the ordinary duties of life. But it is the profound ethical and religious spirit pervading it, which gives it its distinctive character. Love to God, as the supreme motive of human action, is the dominant note struck in this body of Hebrew legislation.

Of that legislation generally the following characteristics may be noted:—

(1) The civil and criminal law of the Jews reached far beyond actions such as modern civilised States can take account of. The feelings and passions of the Israelite were brought under legal control. It was not only in the street and the market, in the city and the field, that legislation directed the Hebrew. It attended him in the solemn hour of his worship and the quiet hour of his thought. It regulated his mental attitude towards God and his disposition towards his fellow-man. Not only must he be guiltless of blasphemy and idolatry, but he must be loyal to the theocracy in heart and faithful in creed. *Thou shalt love Jehovah thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might*, is a demand seven times repeated under slightly varied form (Deut. vi. 5, x. 12, xi. 1, 13, 22, xix. 9, xxx. 6). And the commandment which our Lord connects with this as *like unto it* (Matt. xxii. 39), *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*, is contained in the Code of Holiness (Lev. xix. 18). Laws against violence and theft have a place in the judicial system of every country,

but only in that of Israel it was written, *Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart* (Lev. xix. 17), and *Thou shalt not covet*.

(2) The civil laws of Israel are inspired with a sentiment of *humanity*. This may be contrasted with "the judicial inflexibility of the Romans, in whose eyes the law solely represents absolute justice without any semblance of pity."¹ And it is especially to be noticed in the regulations as to Hebrew slaves (Ex. xxi. 1-6, 20), the laws of debt (Deut. xv. 1-11), and usury (Ex. xxii. 25-27; Deut. xxiii. 19, 20), precepts as to loans and wages (Deut. xxiv. 6, 10-13, 17, 18), and the poor laws (Lev. xix. 9, 10; Deut. xxiv. 19-21). Even beasts come in for a share in consideration (Deut. xxv. 4).

(3) It is impossible not to feel that the legislation of Israel was, much of it, *ideal*, looking on for its realisation in actual conformity to a future and better time. The attempt, for instance, to apply the principle of the weekly Sabbath to the years, was found to have something Utopian in it, and the same thing may perhaps be said of the law of Jubilee. (For the enactments on the Sabbatical Jubilee Year, see Appendix III.)

¹ Renan, *Hist. of the People of Israel*. bk. iv. ch. xii., note.

APPENDIX II

THE SANCTUARY AND ITS MINISTERS

(See Section B. 2. in the previous Appendix.)

A. THE TABERNACLE.

The description of the Sacred Tent, which in structural form and internal arrangements is represented to have been suited for the complete ceremonial of the Israelite worship as it was performed in the Temple, is preceded by an account of the freewill offerings made for its erection and adornment. These consisted of—

- (a) Metals ; gold, silver, and brass.
- (b) Textile fabrics, blue, purple, scarlet ; fine linens, and goats'-hair stuff.
- (c) Skins ; ram, dyed red, and badger.
- (d) Wood ; *shittim* or acacia.

There were, besides, offerings of oil, spices, and incense for ceremonial purposes, and gems for the sacerdotal ephod and breastplate.

The purpose of these offerings is expressed in the verse, *Let them make me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show thee, the pattern of the tabernacle (marg. dwelling), and the pattern of all the furniture thereof, even so shall ye make it.* The superintendence of the work is said to have been intrusted to Bezaleel of the tribe of Judah, a man *filled with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship.* And associated with him we find Aholiab of the tribe of Dan, and others *wisehearted* (Ex. xxxi. 2-6).

Structure and Dimensions.—Following the account in Exodus we observe that, like the Temple, the Tabernacle proper,

known generally as *The Tent of Meeting* (A.V. *Tabernacle of the Congregation*), or *The Tent of the Testimony*, stands at the western end of a court. This is oblong in shape, its length, 100 cubits, being exactly double its breadth. It is surrounded by canvas screens, such as are still used in the East. Its entrance, on the eastern side, is 20 cubits wide, and is closed by curtains.

The Tent itself forms a rectangle 30 cubits long, 10 wide, and 10 high, and consists of an outer hall (Holy Place), extending over two-thirds of the whole length, and an inner recess (*Holy of Holies*) shaped like a cube, 10 cubits in length, breadth, and height. In the Temple of Solomon the corresponding dimensions were exactly double.

The two sides and the western end are enclosed by boards of shittim wood overlaid with gold. Four successive sets of curtains looped together form the covering, and fall down tentwise over the sides, and hangings of fine linen screen the entrance of the outer chamber, and others of a more sumptuous kind form the veil between the Holy and the Most Holy Place.

Furniture. — The inner chamber contains only the Ark of the Covenant. In the outer is the Altar of Incense, the Table of Shewbread, and the Golden Candlestick.

The Altar of Burnt Offering stands in the midst of the court. On it all sacrifices and oblations are to be offered; but of the sin-offerings, part must be burnt without the camp. Between this altar and the entrance to the Holy Place stands a laver for the ablutions of the priests.

B. THE PRIESTS AND LEVITES.

The appointed ministers of this sanctuary are called Priests and Levites. In the fully developed sacerdotal system the two classes of men represented by these names occupy towards one another a different position to that, apparently, assigned to them in the historical books, in Deuteronomy and in Ezekiel. From an express declaration of this prophet (Ezek. xliv. 10–16) we gather that all Levites were at one time eligible for all priestly functions, and in Deuteronomy the repeated expression, *the priests the Levites* (xviii. 1, etc.; comp. Josh. iii. 3, viii. 33; Jer. xxxiii. 18; 2 Chron. v. 5, R.V.),

appears to confirm this. But in the completely organised system these functions are confined to the sons of Aaron, while the Levites, specifically so called, hold a subordinate place and fill inferior offices.

Dress of the Priests.—This consists of linen drawers with a close-fitting tunic, also of linen, fastened with a girdle, and reaching, according to Jewish tradition, to the ankles. A cap or turban covers the head, while in all ministrations the officiating priest, it may be inferred, goes barefoot.

The chief of the body, the High Priest, has a peculiar dress, which passes at his death to his successor. It is composed of eight parts. Of these the drawers, tunic, girdle, and turban he wears in common with all his order. In addition are the *blue robe*, with its trimming of pomegranates in blue, red, and crimson, with a golden bell between each pomegranate; the *ephod*, upon which is the *breastplate*; the *mitre*, with its gold plate engraved with the words, *Holiness to Jehovah*.

Urim and Thummim.—The breastplate or sacred pouch, called also the *breastplate* (or *pouch*) of *judgment*, was to contain the mysterious Urim and Thummim, the sacerdotal oracle whose origin is involved in as much obscurity as is the mode in which it was used. This pouch was made of the same material as the ephod, was a span square, and was set in front with twelve jewels, arranged in four rows, each engraved with the name of a tribe. It was firmly fastened to the shoulders of the ephod by gold chains passing through gold rings, and to the lower part of the ephod, just above the girdle, by a blue ribbon passing through other gold rings.

Many scholars, among them lately, Professor Hommel,¹ have found the origin of this breastplate in a neck ornament of the chief priest of Memphis, the Urim and Thummim having their prototypes in two symbolical figures which were attached to this ornament, and Renan has connected the word Urim with the Egyptian *uræus*.² And it is certainly not impossible that these names, Urim and Thummim (*The Lights and the Perfections*, Ex. xxviii. 30, R.V. marg.), may have been adopted only as similar in sound to some foreign words of which there were no Hebrew equivalents. In 1 Sam. xiv. 41 scholars, by re-

¹ *The Ancient Hebrew Tradition as Illustrated by the Monuments*, p. 282.

² *Hist. of the People of Israel*, bk. ii. ch. v.

storing the text from the LXX, get the expression *If the iniquity be in me, or in Jonathan, my son, O Lord God of Israel, give Urim; but if it be in Thy people Israel, give Thummim*. And presently Saul says, *Cast between me and Jonathan, my son*, the word *lots* usual with this verb being omitted. This points to the most probable of the many conjectures made about the mode in which the oracle was obtained, namely, that it was some method of casting lots.

Priestly Functions.—The duties of the priests were to feed the golden lamp outside the veil with oil (Ex. xxvii. 21; Lev. xxiv. 2-4), to clean the altar of burnt-offering of ashes and keep the fire always alight (Lev. vi. 9-13), to offer the morning and evening sacrifices (Ex. xxix. 38-42), and to pronounce the benediction (Num. vi. 24-26). It fell to them also, apparently, to place the twelve fresh loaves of shewbread every sabbath on the table before Jehovah (Lev. xxiv. 58). They were also the ministrants in all special and individual acts of offering (Lev. i.-vii.). They determined the valuation of vows (Lev. xxvii.), conducted the ceremonies at the consecration of a Nazirite (Num. vi. 1-21), and examined into cases of leprosy and adultery (Lev. xiii.-xiv.; Num. v. 12-31). Moreover, as depositaries of the law, they were to instruct the people in the statutes of Jehovah (Lev. x. 11; Deut. xxxiii. 10; 2 Chron. xv. 3), and took part in the administration of justice, especially in difficult cases (Deut. xvii. 8-12, xxi. 5; comp. Ezek. xlv. 24).

The High Priest had some functions peculiar to his office. He offered incense every morning and evening (Ex. xxx. 7, 8). He alone was permitted to enter the Holy of Holies, which he did once a year, on the great Day of Atonement, when he sprinkled the blood of the sin-offering upon the mercy-seat, and burnt incense within the veil (Lev. xvi.).

The Levitês, or those of them who were not priests, acted as assistants to the latter.

Support of Priests and Levites.—The tribe of Levi was assigned no territorial possession, but received from the other tribes a tithe of the produce of their land, from which they, in turn, paid a tithe to the priests (Num. xviii. 21-26). In addition, forty-eight cities, four on the territory of each tribe, of which thirteen are named as appropriated to priests, and set apart for their abode; and in these they

might acquire houses of their own, and might pasture their cattle in the adjacent fields (Num. xxxv. 6). Six of these cities, three on each side of the Jordan, were to be *cities of refuge* for the manslayer (Num. xxxv. 6-13; Josh. xxi. 4). There were other sources of priestly income: redemption-money (Num. xviii. 14-17; Lev. xxvii. 1-25); share of spoil taken in war (Num. xxxi. 25-54); and offerings many and various.

APPENDIX III

TIMES AND SEASONS

As we speak of a natural and a Christian year, so the Hebrews had a religious year and a civil year. They counted time both by the seasonal changes that brought cold and heat, seed-time and harvest, or by the succession of months, and also by the recurrence of their religious institutions.

THE MONTHS.

Previous to the Exile, only four of the months appear to have had names, namely, Abib (first), Zif (second), Ethanin (seventh), Bul (eighth). See Ex. xiii. 4, etc. ; 1 Kings vi. 1, 37, viii. 2, vi. 38.

After the Exile other names were adopted, seven of which appear in the Bible, namely, Nisan (first), Sivan (third), Elul (sixth), Chisleu (ninth), Tebeth (tenth), Sebat (eleventh), and Adar (twelfth). See Neh. ii. 1 ; Esth. viii. 9 ; Neh. vi. 15, i. 1 ; Esth. ii. 16 ; Zech. i. 7 ; Esth. iii. 7.

The remaining five are known from later Jewish writings, namely, Iyar (second), Tammuz (fourth), Ab (fifth), Tisri (seventh), and Marcheshvan (eighth).

Another method of designating the months was by their numerical order, *e.g.* the *first month* (Ex. xii. 2), the *second month* (Ex. xvi. 1), etc.

The *first day of each month* was observed as a holy day, and was marked by special sacrifices and by the sound of silver trumpets (Num. x. 10 ; Ps. lxxxi. 3). This was **The Feast of the New Moon.**

THE SEVENTH MONTH, DAY, AND YEAR.

The *religious* year began with the month of Abib, in which the Passover was held : the seventh new moon of the religious year was regarded as the beginning of the *civil* year, and had rites peculiar to it. The blast of the silver trumpets was heard so often on it that it was called a *day of blowing* the trumpets (Num. xxix. 1), and became known as **The Feast of Trumpets**.

The Sabbath.—The only day of the week which had a name was the seventh, the Sabbath, or day of rest.

But it was marked not only by cessation from labour but by religious services that recalled the fact that it had been specially *blessed and hallowed* (Ex. xx. 11). A *holy convocation* was proclaimed on it (Lev. xxiii. 3). It had its special burnt-offering in addition to the usual daily sacrifices which were on this day doubled (Num. xxviii. 19). The shewbread was renewed on the Sabbath in the Holy Place (Lev. xxiv. 8). Deliberate profanation of the day was punished with death (Ex. xxxi. 14).

God's claim on time was marked not only by the weekly Sabbath but also by the specially sacred character given to the seventh month, which was treated as a Sabbath among months (Lev. xxiii. 24). It began with the Feast of Trumpets already mentioned. Its tenth day was **The Day of Atonement** (Lev. xxiii. 27 ; Num. xxix. 7). Of the observance of this day and its remarkable ceremonial (see Lev. xvi.) there is no mention outside the sacerdotal code. It is the sole *fast day* which the Law prescribes.

The principle of a seventh recurring period of holy rest was extended from days to years in the institution of **The Sabbatical Year**. The laws relating to it embrace four main enactments—rest for the soil (Ex. xxiii. 10, 11 ; Lev. xxv. 2-5), care for the poor and for animals (Ex. xxiii. 11 ; Lev. xxv. 5-7), remission of debts (Deut. xv. 1-3), and manumission of Hebrew slaves (Deut. xv. 12-17).

By a further extension of the principle after a cycle of seven Sabbatical years came **The year of Jubilee**, in which alienated property was to return to the families to whom it had been originally allotted. This ideal territorial arrangement was based on the principle that all the land of Israel belonged to God.

THE FESTIVALS AND DAYS OF HOLY CONVOCATION.

The most definite account of the Jewish sacred year occurs in Lev. xxiii. (comp. Num. xxviii., xxix.). *The set feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are My set feasts. Six days shall work be done: but on the seventh day is a sabbath of solemn rest, an holy convocation; ye shall do no manner of work: it is a sabbath unto the LORD in all your dwellings.*

But there were to be *special* holy convocations. *These are the set feasts of the LORD, even holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim in their appointed season.* Of these holy convocations, seven in number, two, the Feast of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement, have been already mentioned. The other five were connected with the three great national festivals.

(a) The Passover, with the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

(b) The Feast of Pentecost, also known as the Feast of Weeks, of Wheat-harvest, or of the Firstfruits (Acts ii. 1; Ex. xxxiv. 22; Num. xxviii. 26).

(c) The Feast of Tabernacles.

The Passover.—This was at once an agricultural festival of thanksgiving, a feast of consecration at the beginning of harvest (Deut. xvi. 9), and a historical anniversary (Ex. xii.; Deut. xvi. 1–8). Every head of a family was commanded to choose, on the 10th of the first month (Abib or Nisan), a male lamb or goat without blemish, and to kill it on the 14th. The original mode of celebration has been illustrated on page 83, from descriptions given by travellers of the Samaritan Passover. The lamb was roasted whole, and eaten with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. No bone was to be broken, and no parts were either to be removed from the house, or left over to the next day. The meal was to be taken *in haste, with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand.* Only the circumcised were to partake. The festival was to spread over seven days, days of unleavened bread, the first and seventh being days of holy convocation.

Other interesting ceremonies such as the provision of four cups of wine (comp. Luke xxii. 17–20) and the singing of the Hallel (Ps. cxiii.–cxviii.) were introduced by later usage, and we gather from 2 Chron. xxx. 5, that the prescribed mode of

observance was not always strictly maintained. Only four instances of the observance of the feast, subsequent to its institution, are recorded in the Old Testament (Josh. v. 10 ; 2 Chron. xxx. 26, xxxv. 18 ; Ezra vi. 20).

Pentecost. — *Seven weeks shalt thou number unto thee : from the time thou beginnest to put the sickle to the standing corn shalt thou begin to number the seven weeks. And thou shalt keep the feast of weeks unto the LORD thy God with a tribute of a freewill offering of thine hand, which thou shalt give, according as the LORD thy God blesseth thee ; and thou shalt rejoice before the LORD thy God, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite, and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are within thy gates* (Deut. xvi. 9-11).

This gives the main features of the second of the National Festivals, which was the Jewish harvest-home, consecrating the end as the Passover had consecrated the beginning of harvest. It lasted only one day, which was a day of holy convocation. Its proper offerings are described in Lev. xxiii. 15-21 ; Num. xxviii. 26-31. The chief feature was the waving of the two loaves, the firstfruits of the wheat harvest, as the Passover barley sheaf had been waved on the morrow after the Passover Sabbath.

The Feast of Tabernacles. — This festival (called also Feast of Ingathering, Ex. xxiii. 16) was celebrated with great rejoicings, falling as it did, in the autumn, from the 15th to the 22nd of the seventh month (Tisri), when the corn and wine and oil were gathered in. It was also historically connected with the sojourn of the Israelites in the booths after the Exodus. Its duration was of seven days, the first of which was a day of holy convocation. An eighth or supernumerary day of holy convocation followed. *On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruits of the land, ye shall keep the feast of the LORD seven days : on the first day shall be a solemn rest, and on the eighth day shall be a solemn rest. And ye shall take you on the first day the fruit of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook ; and ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days. . . . Ye shall dwell in booths seven days* (Lev. xxiii. 39-40).

The numerous sacrifices, more numerous than for any other

festival, are detailed in Num. xxix. 12-38. As many as seventy bullocks were required for the burnt offerings, besides two rams and fourteen lambs, and a kid for a sin offering, supplied daily.

The New Testament references to this feast indicate observances not mentioned in the Old Testament.

After the captivity, two feasts were added to those already celebrated.

The Feast of Purim or Lots instituted to commemorate the preservation of the Jews in Persia from the massacre instigated by Haman (Esth. ix. 24).

The Feast of Dedication commemorating the purging of the Temple after the victories of Judas Maccabæus, B.C. 164.

During the captivity four *fasts* were observed.

APPENDIX IV

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLES

No attempt has been made in the Lessons to assign a date for any event earlier than the settlement of the Sons of Jacob in Egypt. This probably took place towards the end of the Hyksos' rule, about B.C. 1700.

The Call of Abraham may, however, be roughly dated about B.C. 2000. A closer approximation might be reached if Assyriologists could agree about the date of Khammurabi, who was probably the Amraphel of Gen. xiv. This monarch was the sixth of an Arabian dynasty of eleven kings who held sway in Babylonia for a period of 304 years. But the commencement of this reign is placed by some as early as B.C. 2394, by others as late as B.C. 1947. The "Received Chronology" of Usher, printed in the margin of Bibles, gives B.C. 1921 for the Call of Abraham. The Chronology of Hales gives B.C. 2078.

TABLE I.—FROM B.C. 1700 (ABOUT) TO SOLOMON'S ACCESSION

In the following Tables, Egyptian or Assyrian Names connected with Israel's land or history are printed in Capitals :—

| B.C. (about). | Egypt. | Israel. | Assyria and Babylonia. |
|---------------|---|-----------------------|--|
| 1700 | | | |
| 1600 | Expulsion of HYKSOS, and establishment of the 18th Dynasty. Aahmes. AMENÔPHIS I. Thothmes I. Thothmes II. THOTHMES III. AMENÔPHIS II. Thothmes IV. AMENÔPHIS III. | Settlement in Goshen. | The kingdom of Assyria founded with Assur as capital. Kassite dynasty in Babylonia from 1806 to 1229. |
| 1500 | (The diplomatic correspondence of these two monarchs survives in part on the Tel-el-Amarna tablets.) | | |
| 1400 | AMENÔPHIS IV. (Khu-en-Aten). 19th Dynasty. Rameses I. | | |

| | | | |
|------|--|--|---|
| 1350 | SETI I. | Israelites probably among those engaged in the building operations of this king. | |
| 1320 | RAMSES II. | Oppression. | Shalmaneser I. founds Calah. |
| 1300 | SETI II. (Menephtah). | The Exodus. | Conquest of Babylon by Tiglath-Uras of Assyria. From this time forward for many centuries Assyria, not Babylonia, occupies the chief place in the history of Western Asia. But Babylon becomes a sacred city. |
| 1250 | | Settlement in Canaan. | |
| 1240 | 20th Dynasty. | | |
| 1230 | Rameses III. | | |
| 1100 | | | |
| 1050 | 21st Dynasty. | | |
| | | SAUL. DAVID. | Tiglath-pileser I. carries his arms to the Mediterranean and receives presents from Egypt. |
| 1000 | (With one of the later Pharaohs of this dynasty Solomon united himself.) 22nd Dynasty. SHISHAK. | SOLOMON. | |

TABLE II.—THE DIVIDED KINGDOM

| Egypt. | Judah. | B. C. (about). | Israel. | Assyria. | Syria. |
|---|-----------------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|-------------------|--|
| SHISHAK. | REHOBOAM. | 960 | JEROBOAM. | | REZON founded the Syrian kingdom at Damascus. TABRIMMON. |
| OSORKON I. Takeleth. | ABIJAH (Abijam). | | | | |
| OSORKON II. (Possibly the ZERAH of 2 Chron. xiv. 9.) | ASA. | 940 | NADAB. BAASHA. | | BENHADAD I. |
| | | | ELAH. ZIMRI. OMRI. | | |
| | | 900 | AHAB. | | |
| | JEHOSHAPHAT. | | AHAZIAH. JEHORAM. | Assur-natsir-pal. | BENHADAD II. |
| | JEHORAM. AHAZIAH. ATHALIAH. | 870 | JEHU. | | HAZAEI. |
| | | 860 | | SHALMANESER II. | |

| | | | | | |
|---------------|------------------------|-----|------------------------------|---|---------------|
| 23rd Dynasty. | JOASH. | 850 | ЈЕОАШАЗ. | Assur-bani-pal. | BENHADAD III. |
| | AMAZIAH. | 820 | ЈОАШ (Jehoash). | RIMMON-NIRARI III. | |
| | AZARIAH, or UZZIAH. | 790 | ЈЕРОБОАМ II. | | |
| | | 780 | | | |
| | | 750 | ZECHARIAH. SHALLUM. | TIGLATH-PILESER III. (PUL, or Pulu). 2nd Assyrian Empire. | REZIN. |
| | JOTHAM. | 740 | MENAHEM. PEKAHIAH. | | |
| 24th Dynasty. | AMAZ. | 738 | PEKAH. | 2nd Babylonian king- dom founded by Nabonassar. | |
| | | 730 | HOSHIA. | | |
| | HEZEKIAH. | 722 | End of Kingdom of Israel. | SHALMANESER IV. SARGON. | |

TABLE III.—JUDAH

| Egypt. | Judah. | B.C. | Assyria and Babylonia. | Other Nations. |
|--|--------------------|---------------------------|--|--|
| 25th Dynasty. SABAKA. | HEZEKIAH. | 730 (about) 727 722 | SHALMANESER IV. SARGON. MERODACH-BALADAN seizes Babylon. | 776 B.C. Era of the Olympiads. 753 B.C. Reputed founda- tion of Rome. |
| TIRHAKAH. | MANASSEH. AMON. | 705 700 (about) 681 | SENNACHERIB. ESAHHADDON. ASSUR-BANI-PAL (Sardana- palus). | |
| 26th Dynasty. Pse- meth I. (Psammeti- chus). | JOSIAH. | 640 (about) | | Median Empire. Cy- axares. Alyattes, king of Lydia. |
| NECHO. | | 633 | | |

| | | | |
|---|---|--|--|
| JEHOAHAZ. JEHOIAKIM. | 610 (about) 610 (about) 606 | NEBUCHADNEZZAR marches westwards. Defeats Necho at Carchemish. Succeeds his father. | Fall of Nineveh. |
| Psemthek II. UAHABRA (Hophra). Aahmes II. (Amasis). | 605 604 598 598 594 590 587 570 562 560 556 555 538 | EVIL-MERODACH. Neriglissar. Laborosoarchod. Nabunahid. Fall of Babylon. | Astyages, king of Media. Croesus, king of Lydia. CYRUS deposes Astyages and conquers Lydia. |

TABLE IV.—AFTER THE CAPTIVITY

| Egypt and Persia. | Judea. | B.C. | Greece. | Rome. |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|--------------------------|
| Cambyses. | Zerubbabel. | 536 529 527 | Death of Pisistratus. Æschylus (525-456). | |
| Darius Hystaspis. | Dedication of second Temple. | 521 516 514 510 | Hipparchus slain. Expulsion of Hippias. Sophocles (495-406). Battle of Marathon. Herodotus (484-408). Battle of Salamis. Euripides (480-406). Plataea and Mycale. | Expulsion of Tarquinius. |
| XERXES. | | 490 485 480 | | |
| ARTAXERXES (Longi- manus). | Ezra. Nehemiah. | 479 465 458 451 445 | Pericles supreme at Athens. | Laws of the xii. Tables. |

TABLE V.—THE PROPHETS

Hebrew prophecy did not take a written form till the ninth century before Christ was drawing to a close, and, indeed, it had ended before any was given to the world under the seer's own name. But prophets had been a power in the state, chiefly in the northern kingdom, since the death of Solomon, and David in his individual actions, if not in his policy, was much under the influence of Nathan and Gad. Elijah and Elisha stand out, however, so conspicuously as to dwarf all the rest. For a century from Ahab's accession, about B.C. 900, these two figures occupy the chief place in Israelite story. Soon after prophetic books began to appear. In our Bibles these are not arranged in chronological order, but the four longest, usually on that account called "major," have been placed first.

BEFORE THE CAPTIVITY.

| Name. | B.C. (about). | Kings under whom they prophesied. |
|------------------|---------------|---|
| Joel (?) | 790-760 | Uzziah (but according to some much later). |
| Amos | 780-750 | Jeroboam II. (Uzziah). |
| Hosea | 780-730 | Jeroboam II.—Hoshea (Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz). |
| Isaiah | 750-710 | Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah. |
| Micah | 740-720 | Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah. |
| Nahum | 660-630 | Manasseh, Amon, Josiah. |
| Zephaniah . . . | 630-620 | Josiah. |
| Habakkuk . . . | 610-600 | Jehoiakim. |
| Jeremiah . . . | 620-570 | Josiah—Zedekiah. The captivity. |

AFTER THE CAPTIVITY.

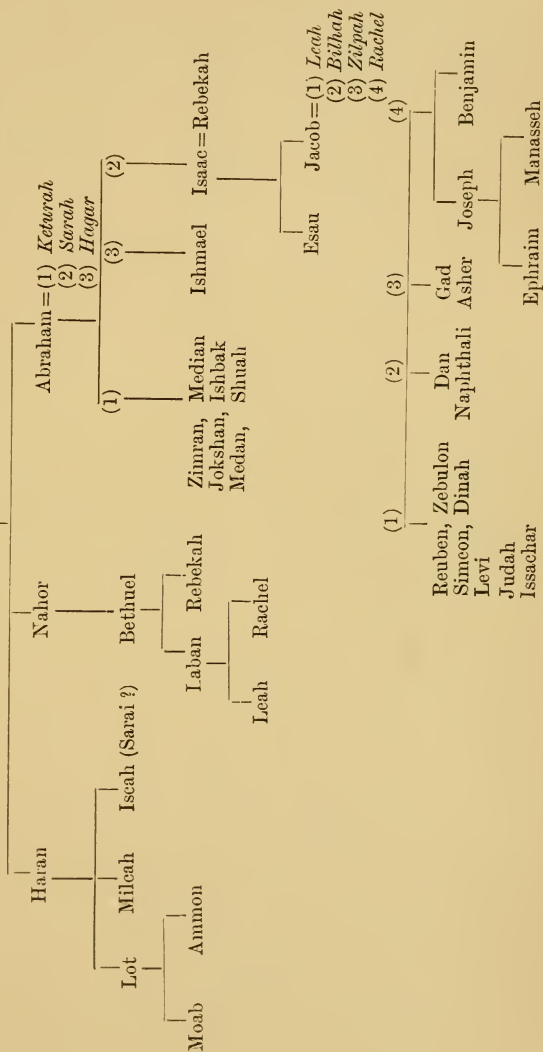
| Name. | B.C. (about). | Period. |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| Obadiah | 580 | Soon after the destruction of Jerusalem (?). Captivity. |
| Ezekiel | 590-570 | |
| The great unnamed Isa. xl.-lxvi. . | 530 | Rebuilding of the Temple. |
| Haggai | 520 | |
| Zechariah | 520 | Judah a Persian province. |
| Malachi | 430 | |
| Jonah | Date of book unknown. | |
| Daniel | Date of book prob- ably about B.C. 167. | |

APPENDIX V.

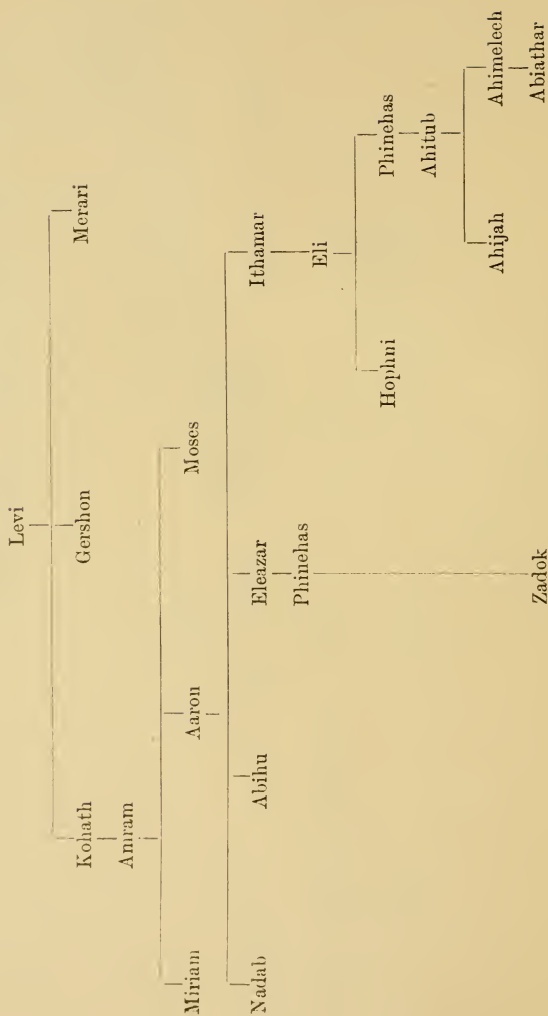
GENEALOGIES.

I. PATRIARCHAL.

Terah



II. LEVITICAL.



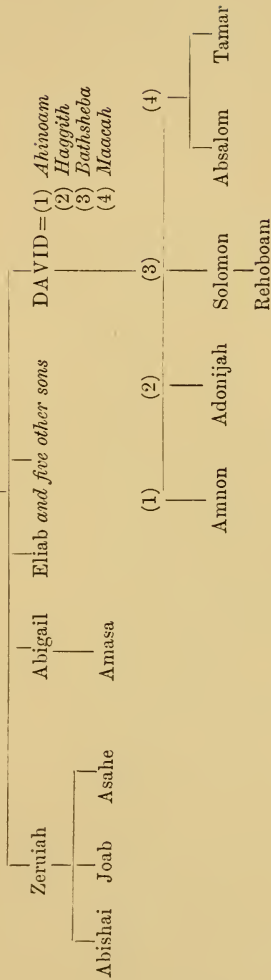
Ahimelech and Ahijah may possibly have been the same.

III. DAVIDIC.

Boaz = Ruth

Obed

Jesse





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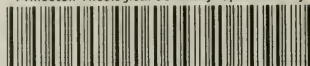
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